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EDITORIAL

As this magazine was going to press, we were saddened to hear that Ross Andru, one of the top comics artists for more than forty years on titles such as AMAZING SPIDER-MAN and *Metal Men*, and the man who illustrated the very *first* adventure to star The Punisher, had passed away. We would like to dedicate this special to his memory.

How do you do an entire magazine about one lone comic book character?

I mean, it was easy with the **X-MEN ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE**, or the **GHOST RIDER AND THE MIDNIGHT SONS MAGAZINE**. After all, we had entire *groups* of characters, and there was a mountain of raw materials.

But one guy. . .*what a terrific opportunity*!

Here we could take one, tight, specific focal point — Frank Castle — and examine how everyone involved in creating his adventures approaches the brutal saga. *Even better*, we could take one of the most controversial and volatile characters in the comic book world and put him under our own little microscope, to find out what makes him tick.

We went back to the beginnings with guys like Gerry Conway (Castle's "father") and Steven Grant (who adopted him later). We approached the people who run his life. . .such as it is. . .today, from hard-boiled writers like Chuck Dixon to tough-as-nails artists like John Buscema and Gary Kwapisz.

We asked them the tough questions, like: "Is The Punisher a hero, a villain, or a psycho?" We followed his visual evolution, from John Romita's first rough sketch through the Mike Zeck days, the Frank Miller days, the Jim Lee days, and into the modern incarnation(s).

And we grilled Editor Don Daley, making him *sweat* until he revealed what he had planned for Castle in the months to come. He was cagey, but we got a lot out of him, and what he has planned isn't *pretty*.

So here you have it, something law enforcement agencies have dreamed of for years — The Punisher on a platter. Take advantage of it while you can. You never know what may happen next.

— Steve Saffel
Editor

[AND A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR. . .]

As editor of the Punisher titles, my job is to put out the best material I can, in the hope of selling as many Punisher comics as possible. My most formidable weapon in this ambitious crusade?

You guessed it — talent. "Talent" as in the people whose abilities keep The Punisher hot, and on the edge.

Recall for a moment the caliber of the creative personnel who have produced some of their finest work on the Punisher titles: Abnett, Baron, Bisley, Braithwaite, Brown, Dixon, Golden, Grant, Hansen, Hama, Haynes, Janson, Jusko, Kubert, Lanning, Lee, McKone, Palmiotti, Portacio, Reinhold, Romita, Stellfreeze, Texeira, Williamson, Zaffino, Zeck — all these and more have left indelible marks upon the history and the vision of this complex and classic character (and wait until you see who's working on the books for '94!).

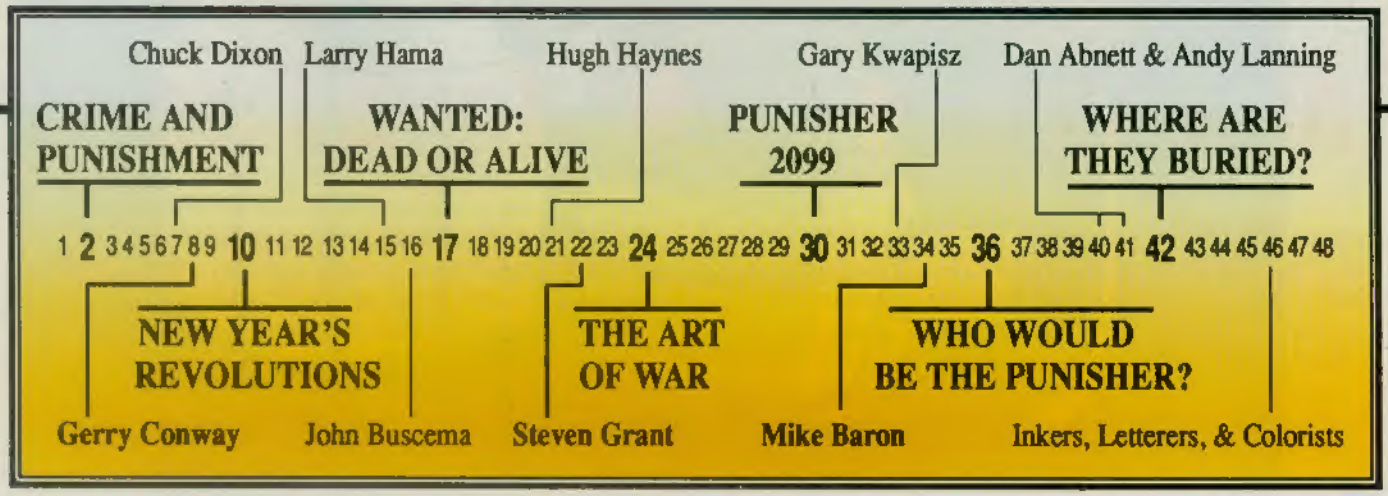
Almost as important as securing talent and giving them room to move is capturing the feeling of *change* in the books. Anything can — and will — happen, whether the controversial defense of an anarchist ("The Flagburner"), The Punisher's prison escape and disguise as a black man ("Final Days"), his rift with Microchip and covert entry into the Mob (the first **PUNISHER WAR ZONE** arc), his brainwashing to assassinate the President ("Psychoville"), or even his current kamikaze attempt to destroy the criminal infrastructure ("Suicide Run").

My goal has always been to come up with something you'd never believe we'd dare, something you might think could never succeed, but something you have to see when we try.

Sometimes we crash and burn, but I consider the alternative — "safe" stories, status quo — to be boring. And I know that if I'm bored, *you're* bored. So the only status quo is change.

And The Punisher is tough enough to withstand change.

— Don Daley, Editor, The Punisher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JRJR
+
JANSON

PUNISHMENT

"I don't think he's a psychopath"

Violence surrounds us. Many of us have been victims, many of us have wanted to do something about it. There exists a fine line between being a good Samaritan and becoming a vigilante. Sometimes taking the law in your own hands means subduing a pickpocket, and other times the repercussions are much more serious. More violence occurs, and the line dissolves.

Some revere him, others condemn him, still many of us quietly approve. "Wish fulfillment" is how Executive Editor Mark Gruenwald described it — fulfilling a human need to see justice done.

He has killed more than five thousand people in the last twenty years and has been the source of debate from the moment he donned his Kevlar costume to cross that line. But since he watched his family mowed down, Frank Castle, The Punisher — vigilante; psycho; seeker of justice — has not once killed an innocent. His method of justice is scorned throughout the Universe of Marvel heroes, but Punisher Editor Don Daley still defends his anti-hero.

"The Punisher's definitely not out of control: the proof is that he's never ever killed an innocent," Daley said. "And given the fact that he's been around for twenty years, and has been written by more writers than virtually any other Marvel character, with the exception of Spider-Man and perhaps Wolverine, I think it's sort of a testament to the fact that he's *not* out of control."

The Punisher relies on his basic perception that he is reacting to *circumstances* that are out of control. His actions create peace where there was none, and keep the scales of justice balanced.

"If you regard government's first duty as protecting its citizens," Daley explained, "and if you take, for example, the bombing of the World Trade Center; or the plan to bomb the Statue of Liberty; or the plethora of assassination attempts on Presidents — on American *and* on foreign soils, many of them successful; home invasions; carjackings; if you look at these things as manifestations of a growing irreverence for life in America, then you may agree with The Punisher that the situation's out of control.

"He's a vigilante. He's heroic. . .although I see him as an anti-hero in the sense that he believes implicitly that the end justifies the means. He believes you can fight fire with fire and that the way to end violence is *through* violence. And that's why I think he isn't a role model," Daley said.

"I see The Punisher as a vigilante *and* a psycho," Gruenwald contended. "He's only marginally a 'super' hero in that he's got the uncanny ability, that they never talk about, to only shoot people who deserve it.

"This is a great power. To be able to determine who really deserves to get it. We don't really see him do all the detective work, [or] see that he's got proof that every single person that he plugs deserves it. But if he's plugging any innocent, a single innocent, that would make him a villain. So therefore, I can only assume that he's never plugging anybody who *doesn't* deserve it. And that's a great power. I can't decide whose right or wrong in everything, and who deserves to be [killed] and who doesn't — but he can."

"Not only does he *not* kill innocent people, but it's perhaps his greatest fear," Daley elaborated. "We never show you the Sherlock Holmes aspects of his work. We try to gloss that over rather quickly — how he establishes some of his verdicts — and move very quickly to the comeuppance. In that sense, this is probably his biggest super power in a character who seemingly has none."

PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

Does watching your loved ones die justify such an extreme reaction against the abundant criminal element? Is The Punisher a psychopath? Does The Punisher have a conscience? Does wanting to punish the guilty out of a personal sense of guilt create a man without a conscience, *without* a sense of right or wrong? Is The Punisher simply crazy?

"A psychopath is someone who has trouble differentiating what is real from what is not," Daley said. "I think The Punisher has his own subjective take on reality. Perhaps it is a grimmer take, but it's a very reality-based perspective. So, no, he's not a psychopath.

"And The Punisher, as a phenomenon, is a very decisive response to that. I think he's heroic, but I don't think he's a role model. As editor, I try to dissuade readers from becoming vigilantes. The Punisher is clad in Kevlar from foot to neck. He wears the Punisher skull on his chest both for psychological warfare purposes and also so people will take a chest shot. He's been around for twenty years, and he's still alive. There's something incredible about that. If you put a skull on your chest and went out there with an automatic weapon, you'd be dead or in jail in a New York minute.

"[Our] object is to show one person who, having been stripped of everything he cared about, intervenes in a situation that is out of control to prevent the situation that's happening around him from reoccurring," Daley said. "I think he has a heightened conscience in the sense that the notions of conscience, guilt, blame, forgiveness, judgement, penance, and paying for one's sins, along with final absolution, all play a part in the continuity. In a larger sense, he's obviously burdened by survivor's guilt, for surviving something that the rest of his family didn't. He failed

to protect them, and he also failed to die with them — in a sense, he abandoned them — twice. I think that his tortured conscience is in large part his driving motivation. That, and a death wish, which you can see as penance, or wanting to return to his family, or just punishment for screwing up.

"I think he's one of the most conscientious characters, right up there with Daredevil and Cap. He's very human."

If Frank Castle is a product of his own spin on reality, The Punisher of Marvel's 2099 Universe is a product of a *completely* dysfunctional society that has deteriorated far more than our own. This society has no collective conscience of its own, and so, 2099 Assistant Editor Matt Morra theorizes, has *created* vigilantism and the need for a vigilante who will act as the public conscience. Is Castle himself proof that our society has lost its own collective sense of what is "just?"

"The 'regular' Punisher is a psychopath, a murdering lunatic," Morra said. "But, here's your metaphor: a child molester [in theory] deserves death, but many only get five years. What happens? He goes to jail and the prisoners themselves often carry out justice. . .in prison."

Does this imply that only the guilty themselves are able to punish the guilty to the extent to which they deserve? Is this, in essence, the source of The Punisher and his ability to carry out his mission?

"The Punisher is killing people who deserve to be killed. Why don't the authorities stop him? He's just one guy. They kind of wink at him. They say, 'yeah, he's outside the law, but he's killing people who deserve to die.'"

"Jake Gallows, who on the surface seems to be similar, has a twist. He still has a conscience;, he *knows* what he is doing is wrong. There is still a little spark of his humanity left where, in the present-day Punisher, that's been extinguished. [Frank Castle] is a hero, though we don't like to admit it. We try to sweep him under the rug. He reflects a violence and anger that is a part of our modern society."

Writer Larry Hama sees The Punisher's actions as a justified reaction in response to a society which is so bent on being "politically correct" that it has forgotten how to protect its own. "That's the psychosis — it's not what The Punisher does," Hama said. "It's not a matter of conscience, it's a matter of awareness, and the Punisher is aware of the criminal element."

"What makes The Punisher dangerous," writer Chuck Dixon added, "is that he is beyond moral conscience. He can justify any of his actions."

CATHARTIC PSYCHOSIS

"[The Punisher] has had a few story sequences in which it seemed like he was emotionally on the edge," Daley said. "I'm not even saying which edge. . .

"He studied to be a priest at one point," Daley added. "I was an altar boy as a kid, so I'm somewhat familiar with the whole Catholic thing, and Christian rituals. I wouldn't say [those issues] have been handled as well as they could be, and I also think that a little of it has been sort of forced on his character.

"But every now and then we allude to it and see what the reaction is [from] the readers. It's nice to have a few options in terms of our arsenal, in terms of how we motivate the character. To say that criminals killed his family and that's why he kills criminals becomes tedious for those who work on the book. To invoke any other rationale for his behavior is not only a break in the monotony, but I think it can make for a fuller, more three-dimensional character."

Mike Lackey (**PUNISHER BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL**) finds that writing The Punisher often helps him deal with the frustrations of being a normal citizen in a world where one often has no control over the actions of others.

"When I think of The Punisher, I always think of him as a man on a mission. I don't think him as a psycho," Lackey said. "I don't think of him as crazy. It's 'crazy' in accordance to society's laws and normalcy, but to The Punisher himself, what he is doing is completely sane, rational, and normal.

"He chooses a goal, he sets about accomplishing it, and he does it. It's just that the result is usually a lot of people dead. He sets himself up for a great big fall, running around offing people and signing his name to these crimes. It would probably be more advantageous for him to work anonymously. Maybe that's the one part of his *persona* that, to me, is nuts.

"But overall, his is the most rational way of fighting crime. He always puts an end to it, it's always final. Spider-Man, the Hulk, Dr. Strange — their villains always come back. None of the Punisher villains really come back. That's why I find him very appealing."

Editor Chris Cooper, and writer of the horror comic **DARKHOLD**, had a particularly interesting point of view, and took full advantage of the opportunity to use the character as a diametrical hero in his book. "With the one story I did with The Punisher, I called it 'The Living Dead' not because there were

"...he's got the uncanny ability, that they never talk about, to only shoot people who deserve it."

these zombies that come to life in the story — they're not the living dead, the one who's really dead is Frank Castle," Cooper said. "The Punisher is basically dead inside. He's just gone and now he's going through the motions. Everything he does is like one long primal scream.

"He's definitely a psycho, and I think that the stories that portray him as a psycho are the best Punisher stories. The beginning arc of **PUNISHER WAR ZONE** really did a beautiful job portraying that. I think it was Chuck Dixon who wrote the take on The Punisher as a psycho, and those early **WAR ZONE** issues are really, I think, on target. . .so to speak."

"I don't think he's a raving psycho," Dixon said. "He invokes every male stereotype and internalizes it, he tries to hide his emotions. He's stoic, he feels no joy, no pain, no human emotions. I think this was best seen when he threatened to kill Micro Chip — his best friend.

"He's a tragic character in the immortal mode. Readers identify with him on the level of frustration you feel when the world doesn't go the way you want it to."

LET THE PUNISHMENT. . .

"I consider him fantasy wish fulfillment for those of us who live in an environment who see gross injustice and wish they could cut through all the red tape in the system and get straight to the matter of meting out justice," Mark Gruenwald said. "I see him as a psycho and a vigilante, and I'm glad he's not my friend."

Americans take pride in the relative competence of our judicial system. Still, people do slip through the cracks, innocent people do die and there never seems to be enough protection to keep that from occurring. Citizens are frustrated by violence, law enforcement officers are frustrated, and some of them are corrupt. The continuing cycle of violence and anger and the need to blame someone or something for wrongs committed, allow us to shut out eyes to what we know is wrong. We are able to convince ourselves that, if a known criminal is murdered, it is not as *wrong* because the victim was at one time the attacker.

One of the flaws Larry Hama perceives in our justice system is that "our law enforcement ranks are made up of the lower classes. The upper classes don't want to get involved."

Drawing comparisons between today's democratic society and those of the past, Hama concluded that even the most famous and brilliant societies as the Romans had a hard line when it came to punishing the guilty. "If you killed your father, you got death; if you spat on the sidewalk, you got death," Hama concluded. "Incarceration is a 20th century conception, in five thousand years of civilization, prisons were only developed in the last one hundred years." Our society has become so complex, according to Hama, that the lines of punishment have become blurred. We, as a society, live in fear of killing one innocent person and in the process are willing to let those who are guilty off free, essentially. The Punisher, he noted, is the reaction to a system which doesn't work, to a system which says, "the hell with education," and yet still feels the need to act in a morally correct way. The morality of the situation, however, is not clear.

"Crime is out of control," Dixon said. "[The Punisher] is not a hero or a role model, but he responds to a situation by his own code of justice."

"I live in Brooklyn; I've had guns pointed at me; I've had knives pulled on me; I've been jumped. I think people are afraid," Daley concluded. "We have eleven-year-olds blowing each other away in public schools. I've seen people shoot at other people and I think that many segments of the general populace — the elderly, anyone living alone, anyone with any kind of physical challenge, many women — I think people are afraid. Hence, the appeal of The Punisher."

Lia Pelosi, having accumulated a tremendous backlog of valuable journalistic experience at Comic Scene, Starlog, and ***MARVEL AGE****, has gone on to apply her expertise in the* ***BARBIE*** *editorial office. She continues as a key* ***MARVEL AGE*** *contributor, and is currently working on a treatise concerning the relationship between Don Pendleton's "Executioner," theology, and Sherlock Holmes.*

PRO FILES

— *Karl Bollers*

CHUCK DIXON

As a boy in the sixties, **THE PUNISHER**, **THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL**, and **THE PUNISHER: WAR ZONE** writer Chuck Dixon never dreamt that he would someday be chronicling the adventures of Frank Castle, everybody's favorite gun-toting vigilante.

Chuck freely admits that he attributes his writing skills to years of reading books and watching various films, as opposed to time and money spent taking numerous writing courses. Today Chuck is putting those skills to use on a monthly basis. In clear tones, the native Philadelphian revealed, "I always knew that I wanted to tell stories, even at a very early age, and wasn't able to make that dream a reality until I broke into the comics industry back in 1983." Chuck listed former **EPIC** Comics' Editor in Chief Archie Goodwin, **PUNISHER: WAR ZONE** writer Larry Hama, and countless others as having influenced his career.

When asked what his personal highlights have been in terms of the work he's produced, Chuck retorted, "**PUNISHER: WAR ZONE #1-6.**" This story arc marked the debut of the latest ongoing Frank Castle title, and Chuck attributes its success to what he terms "the perfect creative meeting." He is, of course, talking about his collaboration with penciler John Romita, Jr. (whose talents are currently being utilized on **UNCANNY X-MEN**). "The combined work of everyone on that first story arc is what made it outstanding," he said.

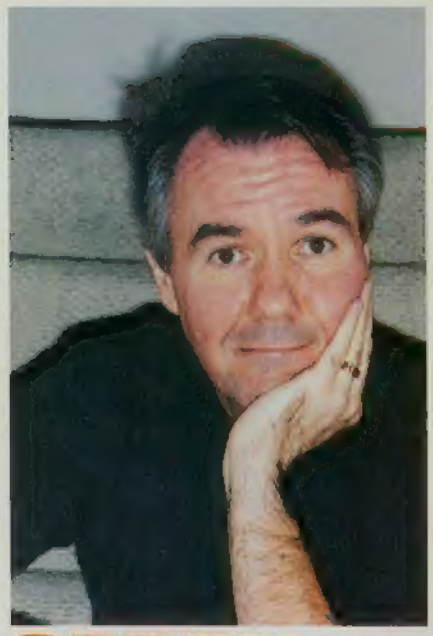
In terms of having a personal philosophy towards writing as a craft, Chuck expressed, "I don't really have much of one. I usually don't try to figure out the 'whys' and the 'wherefores.'" Instead, he prefers relying on an intuitive sense. However, when it comes to the philosophy of The Punisher, Chuck is willing to delve a bit deeper.

"Frank Castle is the quintessential tragic Marvel hero — tragedy is at the root of every story, and rightly so. This is what makes him my favorite comic book character of all time.

"People tend to say that the character is one-dimensional and that nothing can be done with him," he added. Chuck disagrees with them, feeling instead that, because the character has this singular obsession, it only *appears* to make him simplistic. It is that obsessive behavior that gives all of the Punisher titles their unique tone, different from any other Marvel comic. This tends to give the book, and Frank Castle's future, an apocalyptic sense.

Chuck Dixon's future is an entirely different story, far from apocalyptic. He plans on staying with the Punisher titles for the long haul and, according to Chuck, no future could be brighter!

WAR FILES



GERRY CONWAY

Beginnings

Since Steve Saffel called me a week ago and asked if I'd write a few paragraphs about "how I created The Punisher," I've tried a half a dozen approaches to this article, and none of them has felt right.

I have mixed feelings about those days, twenty-off years ago, when I wrote **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129.** Remembering that time, let alone writing about it, is painful (not because of the comics writing I was doing back then, but because of life in general. I was twenty years old. Life is painful for a lot of people when they're twenty years old.). My thoughts keep slipping sideways and I stop and start and cut things out and then add them back in again. I guess I really don't want to do this. But I told Steve I'd give it a shot, so here it is.

Comics were a different business in 1973-74. There were only two real publishers, Marvel and DC, and Marvel was still Number Two (but coming on strong). At Marvel, Stan Lee was the publisher and Roy Thomas was the sole editor for all forty-odd titles. There were no individual editors, and each writer handled his own book without much direct supervision. Marvel in those days was a writer-driven company, as was the business in general. But at Marvel writers had an unusual amount of freedom because we were, in effect, our own editors.

Like the other writers working for Marvel at the time — Steve Gerber, Len Wein, Doug Moench, Steve Englehart — I pretty much controlled what I wrote in any given issue (unless it affected the main characters in some permanent way, as when we jointly decided to kill off Gwen Stacy). So when I came up with the idea of The Punisher, I didn't have to clear it with anyone or discuss how to write the story. I just did it.

The Punisher was actually conceived initially as a minor character — a henchman for the "real" villain of the issue, the mysterious Jackal. But in the plotting and writing of the book he took on a life of his own, and I realized he needed a better name then the one I'd coined at first (I think I called him The Assassin). I asked Roy for a new name and Roy put it to Stan, and Stan suggested "The Punisher." Then I went to John Romita (the Art Director) and gave him my pencil sketch for

The Punisher's costume — a black jumpsuit with a small human skull on the chest. John expanded the skull motif until it filled The Punisher's chest and merged with his belt, and the rest, as we say somewhat speciously, is history.

Read that first Punisher story and it's all there: the contradictory nobility of the man, his outlaw view of justice, his burning passion to do right, his willingness to use violence to achieve his aims. I had a love-hate passion for this character from the moment he spoke his first words. (He spoke them, I merely typed them.) I loved him for his conviction, his commitment. I hated him for the ease with which he used violence and deadly force. In my initial conception of the man I made him a villain, but in the writing he turned into a hero. He took on a life of his own between the time I conceived him and the time he left my typewriter, and the qualities I found in him during the process have stayed with him in every incarnation since.

Because he was originally conceived as a villain, The Punisher was probably the first mainstream comics hero who regularly crossed the line between good and evil. (Before him, other heroes *seemed* to cross the line, but he really did it. This guy killed people — bad people, usually — but he killed them, and as far as I know, he was the first modern comics "hero" who ever made a name for himself by pulling a trigger.) His instant popularity marked a turning point in comics and opened the way for a generation of similar, morally ambiguous (to put it kindly) heroes. He was a product of his era, of *Dirty Harry* and *The Executioner* and Watergate and Vietnam, but he lasted into our era, and now he speaks to a whole generation of readers who weren't alive when he was born.

Twenty Years is a long time (half my life). Twenty years ago Nixon was still president and the United States hadn't fully withdrawn from Vietnam. George Lucas hadn't made *Star Wars* and Steven Spielberg was still directing television. There were no VCRs, no personal computers, no cable TV. Rob Liefeld was a toddler. It's amazing to me that something I wrote when I was a kid still has an effect on readers today, particularly when I remember the chaos of my own internal life while I was doing it. I'm amazed, I'm proud, and I'm grateful beyond words.

Gerry Conway began his comics career writing a three-page story for one of the DC suspense titles in the late 1960's, and his first major Marvel credit appeared in an issue of SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS. *He has been an editor at Marvel and at DC, and was Editor in Chief at Marvel in 1976. His writing credits include* AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, THE MIGHTY THOR, FANTASTIC FOUR, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN *(which he co-created),* THE AVENGERS, *and* THE INCREDIBLE HULK *(for Marvel) and* Batman, Superman, Justice League, Firestorm, *and* Wonder Woman *(for DC). In the movie field, he was one of the writers of* Conan the Destroyer *and* Fire and Ice, *and his television credits include* Matlock, Father Dowling Mysteries *(for which he was also a producer),* Perry Mason *and the new* Diagnosis: Murder.

NEW YEAR'S

REVOLUTIONS

After two decades of wearing the skull insignia and dealing with the seedy underbelly of the Marvel Universe, Frank Castle's mission has set him on a course of action that may well spell his doom.

The Punisher's downfall will occur in three separate but closely related story arcs. The first (and current), entitled "Suicide Run" will set Frank Castle down a dark path from which there is no return. Next, The Punisher who survives will be stalked by the heroes of the Marvel Universe in "Pariah," the penultimate arc. Finally, as 1994 closes out, readers will see the ultimate incarnation of The Punisher write his last war journal in "Final Entry."

LIVING ON THE EDGE

In **THE PUNISHER**, **THE PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL**, and **THE PUNISHER: WAR ZONE**, the vigilante is heading helter-skelter towards his own demise. "The Punisher is a dangerous man embroiled in a dangerous life-style," Punisher Editor Don Daley stated, "and in the 'Suicide Run' story-arc we'll be taking Castle down a road you can only travel once. Will he survive his suicidal tendencies? Maybe, but if he does, what sort of shape he'll be in remains to be seen. And if he doesn't, well, the books haven't been cancelled, so we're left with the question of just who will don the kevlar skull next."

In January, The Punisher wraps up his "Suicide Run" (in **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #64**), but the result will be that the heroes of the Marvel Universe will keep a wary eye on whomever tries to sew together the patchwork of The Punisher's mission. "In all three monthly books and in the various annuals and specials, we'll be working hard to get a grip on The Punisher, both as a character and a concept. We'll be getting back to the essence of his character, creatively speaking, and we're going to strive for more internal consistency among his myriad appearances. From now on, whomever is The Punisher will act the same way in *every* book he or she is in, and events that occur in one title will be reflected and referred to in the others. Every story-arc, while standing on its own, will also serve to drive him forward. . .towards — what?!"

Writer Chuck Dixon was just as mysterious concerning the specific details of what The Punisher will be going through "After 'Suicide Run,' we're going to explore The Punisher's psyche — really get inside the head of the sort of person who would go to the extremes to which The Punisher is driven. And I mean *extremes*!"

PARIAH OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE

After "Suicide Run," writer Steven Grant and artists Hugh Haynes and Mark McKenna will jump from **THE PUNISHER** to **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL** to follow up with some startling developments in the character's relationship to the rest of the Marvel Universe. Beginning in **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #65**, THE Punisher will find himself totally alone and on the run.

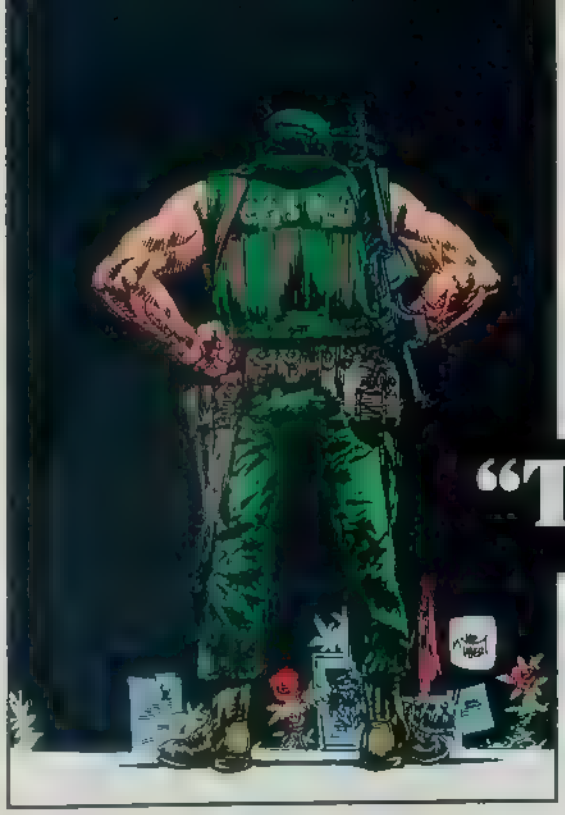
"When The Punisher finishes with his 'Suicide Run,' his life is going to be even tougher than it was before," Grant explained. "Over the last couple of years, reaction to The Punisher's nastiness has become diluted. Too often we have seen other heroes, no matter how moral, team-up with The Punisher against a common foe, and then let him escape when the dirty work was done. That won't happen in 1994. The Punisher is a real scary guy, someone people just don't want to be near. He's the ultimate loose cannon."

Does that mean that The Punisher will no longer interact with the Marvel Universe at large? "Not exactly," Daley pointed out. "In fact, it means just the opposite. Now, The Punisher who survives "Suicide Run" will be hunted continuously by the cream of Marvel's heroes." In the "Pariah" story arc The Punisher will tussle with Captain America, Spider-Man, and Daredevil, all heroic characters who now are disgusted by The Punisher's crime-fighting methods and who feel responsible that he is still on the loose.

Grant elaborated. "I want The Punisher to be the absolute pariah of the Marvel Universe. No one should want to deal with him; he's not a team-up character. He doesn't like to minimize his control of a situation anyway, and teaming-up with a hero does just that. He doesn't like to explain himself to anyone. That doesn't mean he won't meet up with the general Marvel Universe. But now, when he does, he's considered as prime a target as the scum he puts out of business. Nobody will trust him in the slightest. He'll be on the outs with everyone: police, mobsters, heroes. The white skull on his chest is going to be a bullseye."

> "There isn't a character in this story that you wouldn't be afraid of."

The consequences of "Pariah" will last nearly the entire year. "**PUNISHER #99** will be out in December 1994, as will **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #75**, and the story that comes out at this monumental time in the Punisher's career is what we've been building towards all along. A lot of people out there think we're bluffing about killing Frank Castle and replacing him with a new Punisher. I don't want to reveal just yet what the ultimate outcome of the next year's worth of Punisher tales will be, but the nay-sayers are in for a surprise. Literally anything can happen in this book. ."



"the high concept Punisher stories: stories that don't necessarily tie directly month in and month out to what is happening in the other books." The upcoming year's worth of **WAR ZONE** will focus on the Punisher's life as the deadliest enemy of all that is corrupt

"Like always, **WAR ZONE** will move in story-arcs, with Larry Hama, Chuck Dixon, and a known writer from another field who has never worked for Marvel, rotating in and out of the writer's slot," Daley explained. "The Dixon stories will take Punisher to some exotic locales as he goes after crime outside the United States, while the Larry stories will tie up the ends of 'Suicide Run' "

"The white skull on his

THE FINAL ENTRY?

The specific plans for **PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL** are being played close to the vest, as well. This monthly series has always been the place for readers to see inside Frank Castle's head as he moves from one deadly encounter to the next, and it will provide a stark look as The Punisher tries quell his humanity in order to push to the limit his personal war on crime and corruption.

"I can tell you," writer Chuck Dixon explained, "that [we] are going to rebuild The Punisher's crime-fighting network. Readers will get a chance to look inside his safehouses and see just how he goes about waging his war. We'll also be using — [many] for the first time — a lot of the weapons and gadgets that appear in the **PUNISHER ARMORY** series, showing in action just what a lot of the exotic equipment. . .is used for. But *what* he'll be using all this stuff for is a secret.

"Also," Daley added, "'Pariah' in **THE PUNISHER** war journal is going to so radically change The Punisher's status quo, and the stories in **THE PUNISHER** for the second half of '94 will dovetail in. Events happening in one will be reflected in the other and they'll share certain plot points."

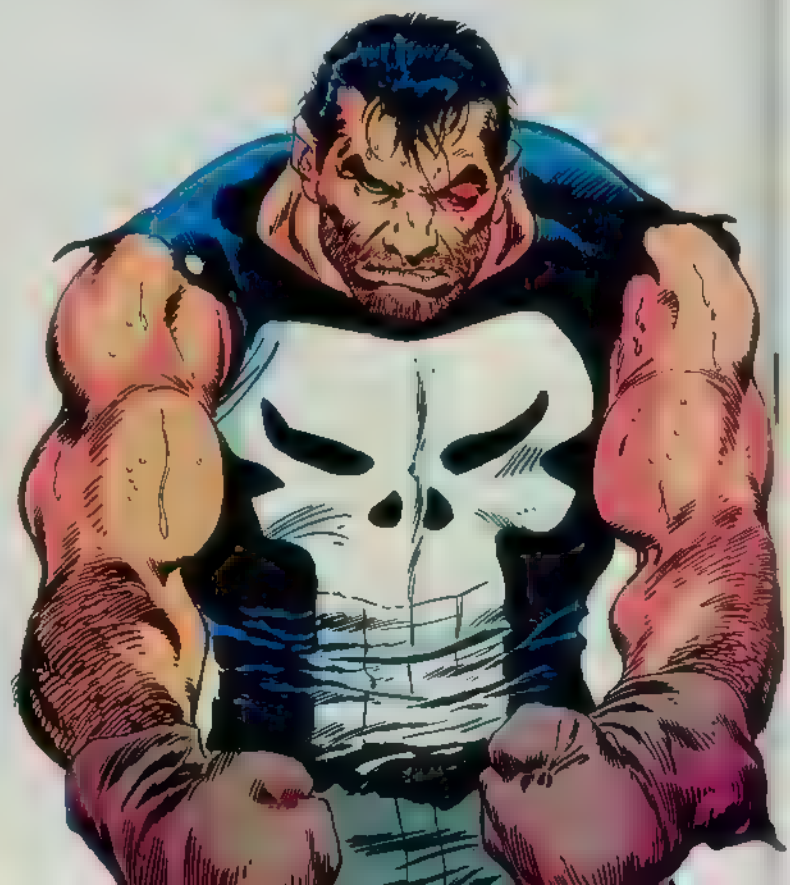
Beyond that, Daley was tight-lipped concerning the specifics of **WAR JOURNAL**. "December 1994 is when everything will be revealed. I really cannot say much more than that, without revealing too much. December '94 — that's when **WAR JOURNAL #75** comes out Notice how it comes out just one month before **PUNISHER #100**? Rest assured this will be a controversial time for The Punisher. Chuck and Larry and Steve have cooked up a mind-blowing story — one we just couldn't pass on, one we feel is worth the price we'll have to pay."

FROM ONE DEATH TO THE NEXT

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE has always been the series where various creative teams have told what Don likes to refer to as

In a story that will run from **WAR ZONE #26-#31**, Chuck Dixon is joined by artist John Buscema The Punisher travels — in role camouflage — to Bosqueverde, that tiny island off the coast of South America. However, he's not there for a vacation, he's there to kill a huge drug supplier. "I'm going to take advantage of John's flair for drawing exotic locales: jungles, dirty prisons, desolate islands," Dixon stated. "John's got a certain talent for bringing out the raw emotion of places like that." Punisher's little island war goes sour when he's captured and thrown in the island's penal colony Before Micro and Ice (one of Castle's compatriots from **THE 'NAM**) can arrive to help, Castle is stripped of what dignity he has left. He will be forced to simultaneously fight three brutal opponents for the camp commandant's entertainment, if he is to live long enough to escape alive. "It's a primal story," Daley stated, "primitive, in fact. There isn't a character in this story that you wouldn't be afraid of "

Following this deadly trip to the islands, Dixon teams with Joe Kubert to take the Punisher on a field trip to what's left of the



crumbling Soviet empire. Here, The Punisher for the first time meets and works with with Draganov, the Russian Punisher, to put down crime and corruption in war-torn Yugoslavia.

SOMETHING SPECIAL IN 1994

The events taking place in The Punisher's twentieth year are so extensive (and explosive) that three monthly books just can't contain them all. Following is a run-down of what else the Punisher editorial team has in store for the world's hardest working vigilante

THE PUNISHER ANNUAL — The 1994 special teams writer Larry Hama and British illustrator Doug Braithwaite for an all-new action tale

THE PUNISHER: WAR ZONE ANNUAL — In the first **WAR ZONE** story arc, The Punisher wiped out nearly the entire Carbone crime family. Now, Rosalie Carbone's uncle Salvatore, presumed dead, returns. he suffered traumatic amnesia when The Punisher shot, drowned, and froze him, but he's back "Thorn" has amnesia and all he knows for sure is that he must destroy The Punisher, no matter how many other people he must kill before he finds his true target. The annual's lead story is written by Chuck Dixon, following up his original arc, with artwork by Dale Eaglesham. Also back from **WAR ZONE** is the assassin Roc in a brutal tale by Ralph Macchio, Dave Ross, and Tim Dzon

PUNISHER ARMORY — Writer/artist Eliot R. Brown continues his inventory of The Punisher's weapons, vehicles, and equipment, just as Chuck Dixon (in particular) begins to work it all into **WAR JOURNAL**, focusing on the esoteric equipment in Castle's arsenal, including high-tech surveillance devices and personal survival gear.

NOT THE PUNISHER ARMORY — A one-shot spoof of The Punisher's arsenal of destruction. (Hey, if you can't make fun of a guy with a grenade launcher and an Uzi, who can you make fun of?) Entries include "Dairy Dynamite," which explodes by itself if you haven't used it before the expiration date, and other wacky devices of death and stealth.

CRUISE HARD — Abnett & Lanning are joined by penciler Hugh Haynes and inkers Mark McKenna and Mick Gray to take Punisher to the high seas. Definitely not the Love Boat, "Cruise Hard" is a one-shot special that will cut Castle off from his normal base of operations and force him to cruise hard and kill fast to live long on his sea legs.

EMPTY QUARTER — This full-length graphic novel marks the triumphant return of writer Mike Baron and artist Bill Reinhold, who put The Punisher through the wringer years ago as the regular creative team on **THE PUNISHER** In **EMPTY QUARTER**, Castle, undercover, crashes a special conference in the Middle East: a seminar of terrorist, by terrorists, for terrorists. Talk about walking naked into the lion's den!

A MAN CALLED FRANK This is the working title for a tale by Chuck Dixon and John Buscema, set in the Old West — a harsh, stark, environment where violence and death strike suddenly, and civilization is too distant for the law to be of any importance. Frank is a quiet man trying to make a life for himself safely away from the lawlessness of the untamed land. But brutality has a way of destroying even the most idyllic life, and of sending even the most peaceful man on a self-imposed mission of vengeance. Don Daley describes it as, "Sergio Leone meets Sam Peckinpah and *Dirty Harry*."

PUNISHER INVADES THE 'NAM — Vietnam raconteur Don Lomax is joined by artist Alberto Saichann for this 80-page bookshelf format special set in the heat of the Vietnam War. This story will show Castle's last mission inside the war-torn country as a member of the U.S. Special Forces. Master military artist Joe Kubert provides the cover and chapter heading art for this unique tale.

PUNISHER YEAR ONE — Abnett and Lanning reveal the never before told story of what happened between the fateful day in the park when Castle's family was murdered and his first kill as the Punisher **YEAR ONE** will be the exploration of the de-evolution of Frank Castle, a loving father and husband, into the homicidal warrior known as The Punisher.

HARD COPY — Abnett & Lanning are joined by artist Doug Braithwaite for a special story guest starring Deathlok in a brutal example of how the heroes view The Punisher. This is not a normal "hero vs. hero story," Daley pointed out. "There have been plenty of hero-fights-hero-over-misunderstanding stories, but 'Hard Copy' is pulled off in such a unique way that it'll set a new standard for this type of tale. It takes a cliched story type, fills it with multiple twists and turns, and makes it so savage that readers will be left gasping."

THE PUNISHER'S LAST SECRET

Rumors abound concerning what may be Marvel's first new crossover with another publisher since the X-MEN teamed with DC Comics's *Teen Titans*. Recent speculation is that Punisher will be involved with this momentous event. Don Daley, however, refused comment, except to say that, "if the Punisher were to go toe to toe with another company's hero, you can bet he would give an explosive accounting of himself."

Jerry A. Novick, creator of "The Hot Sheet," now finds it his job to stay on the cutting edge of the Marvel Universe as the reporter with the "Up Front" beat. He has also contributed to the ***X-MEN ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE***, ***AVENGERS ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE***, *the X-Men trading cards, and was recently inducted into the bloody ranks of Punisher freelance writers.*

PUNISHER #88-#99
On Sale: Monthly
Format: 32-page Comic
Price: $1.25
Writer: Chuck Dixon and TBD
Penciler: Russ Heath and TBD

PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #64-#75
On Sale: Monthly
Format: 32-page Comic
Price: $1.75
Writer: Chuck Dixon, Steven Grant
Penciler: Gary Kwapisz, Hugh Haynes
Inkers: Gary Kwapisz, Mark McKenna, Mick Gray

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #25-36
On Sale: Monthly
Format: 32-page Comic
Price: $1.75
Writers: Larry Hama, Chuck Dixon
Pencillers: John Buscema, Joe Kubert
Inkers: Val Mayerik, John Buscema, Joe Kubert

PUNISHER ANNUAL
On Sale: May 1994
Format: 64-pages
Price: $2.95
Writer: Larry Hama
Penciler: Doug Braithwaite

PUNISHER WAR ZONE ANNUAL
On Sale: June 994
Format: 64-pages
Price: $2.95
Writers: Chuck Dixon, Ralph Macchio
Pencilers: Dale Eaglesham, Dave Ross
Inkers: Dale Eaglesham, Tim Dzon

PUNISHER ARMORY #9
On Sale: February 1994
Format: 32-page Comic, no ads
Price: $2.00
Writer: Eliot R. Brown
Artist: Eliot R. Brown
Cover by Michael Golden

NOT THE PUNISHER ARMORY
On Sale: TBD
Format: 32-page Comic, no ads
Price: $2.00
Writer: Eliot R. Brown, various
Artist: Eliot R. Brown, various

EMPTY QUARTER
On Sale: TBD
Format: 64-page Graphic Novel
Price: TBD
Writer: Mike Baron
Artist: Bill Reinhold

A MAN CALLED FRANK
On Sale: TBD
Format: TBD
Price: TBD
Writer: Chuck Dixon
Artist: John Buscema

PUNISHER INVADES THE 'NAM
On Sale: February 1994
Format: 80-page Bookshelf
Price: $6.95
Writer: Don Lomax
Artists: Alberto Saucharn and Joe Kubert

CRUISE HARD
On Sale: TBD
Format: 72-page Bookshelf
Price: TBD
Writers: Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning
Penciler: Doug Braithwaite
Inker: Joe Rubinstein

PRO FILES

Kurt Butlers

LARRY HAMA

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE writer Larry Hama has quite an extensive, and impressive, background Hama, who was born and grew up in New York City, broke into the publishing industry at an early age, first as a lettering assistant to the late Wally Wood, then as a writer for him.

Later, he did penciling jobs for *National Lampoon*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Esquire* and found work as an inker at Neal Adams' Continuity Studios back in the early 1970s. Hama's first Marvel job, however, was penciling the adventures of Iron Fist in the now defunct **MARVEL PREMIERE**. His career was off to a great start. His *penciling* career, that is.

Then Hama went on to become an editor at D.C. Comics in the late 1970s, where he gained valuable experience, but he left comics for two years in order to pursue an acting career. Among his credits are a role in a Broadway production of the Stephen Sondheim musical *Pacific Overtures*; a role on *M.A.S.H.* (one of the longest running television shows ever); a part on an episode of *Saturday Night Live* (hosted by Martin Sheen, the star of the then-released *Apocalypse Now* — Hama was in the comedy sketch based on the film); and a part as an antagonist on the popular NBC daytime soap *Another World*. However, the siren call of comics eventually lured Hama back to the fold.

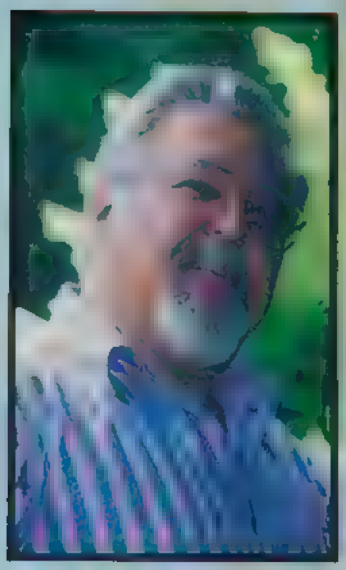
This time he was an editor at Marvel Comics, where he charted the courses of the Conan titles as well as the now-defunct **CRAZY MAGAZINE**. Listing his personal highlights, Hama takes note of **G.I. JOE**, the comic based on the popular toy line that he helped develop. This event is doubly significant for Larry, for after five years of being typecast solely as a penciler, it would be on **G.I. JOE** that he would establish himself as a *writer*. In that five year period, Hama has created over 200 different characters, and he continues to write the series today (as well as the monthly **WOLVERINE** series).

It's the same rich sense of history and experience that he brings to Frank Castle's adventures. Hama's approach to the character involves attitude as a powerful element — though The Punisher contradicts this in the fact that Larry feels Castle has a non-caring attitude most of the time, with seemingly very little regard for life when it comes to whomever he judges "guilty." Yet, he does a 180-degree turn when the lives of innocents are at stake, willing to disregard his own safety, Hama noted

Because of his performance background, Larry was asked his opinion of the *Punisher* movie, to which he replied, "The film didn't work for me at all. It didn't have the attitude or the edge of the comic. It didn't explain why Frank Castle's mentality turned him into a cold-blooded vigilante It was just another movie about revenge." Hama also notes a trend in Hollywood to focus on making heroes nice guys, which was another of the film's flaws to him.

Frank Castle is a challenging mentality to write because he's not very charismatic. He's a vigilante. How do you make him appeal to an audience? The Punisher stands on a bleak precipice, never knowing peace of mind. And if Larry Hama continues to have his way, he never will.

PRO FILES



JOHN BUSCEMA

When a John Buscema punch lands, it's obvious to the reader someone's going to *hurt*. And John's work has been keeping audiences reeling for years.

Always the true professional, John — penciler on **PUNISHER: WAR ZONE** — feels the important thing is handing in the best-looking job he can. "They send me a story every month, and I draw it," he stated simply. Reviewing Marvel characters he has worked on, it would be far easier to talk about those on which he *hasn't*, as the list would be far shorter. John began his career at Marvel in 1948, back when the company was known as *Timely Comics* and virtually all the work was done in-house by the 20 or so artists on staff. John noted, "What we did was six or seven page stories in a book that had four or five stories. No one did a complete book in those days." According to John everyone, pencilers and inkers, all sat in a large room — the original bullpen — turning out the work.

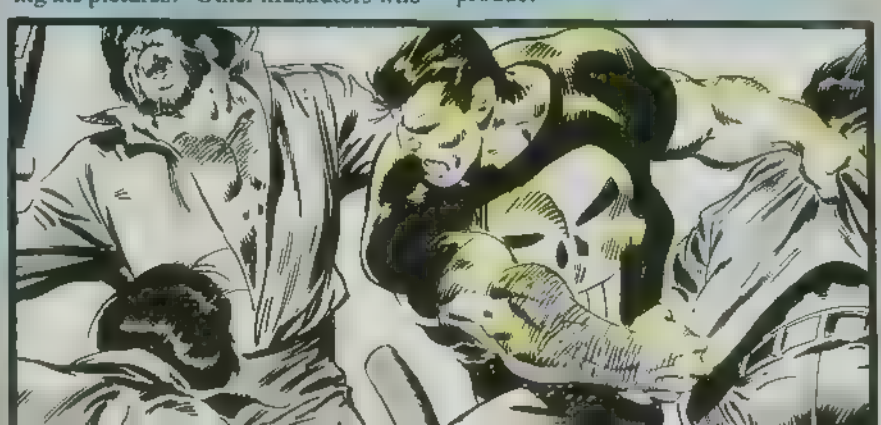
At one time or another he's drawn all of Marvel's top heroes including Spider-Man, The Avengers, The X-Men, Thor, The Hulk, and The Fantastic Four. He illustrated the legendary first cycle of Silver Surfer stories by Stan Lee, and his all-time favorite character is Conan the Barbarian. To many, John is the *definitive* penciler for Robert E. Howard's barbarian hero (he spent about 10 years penciling the Cimmerian's adventures), and he describes The Punisher as a "modern-day Conan."

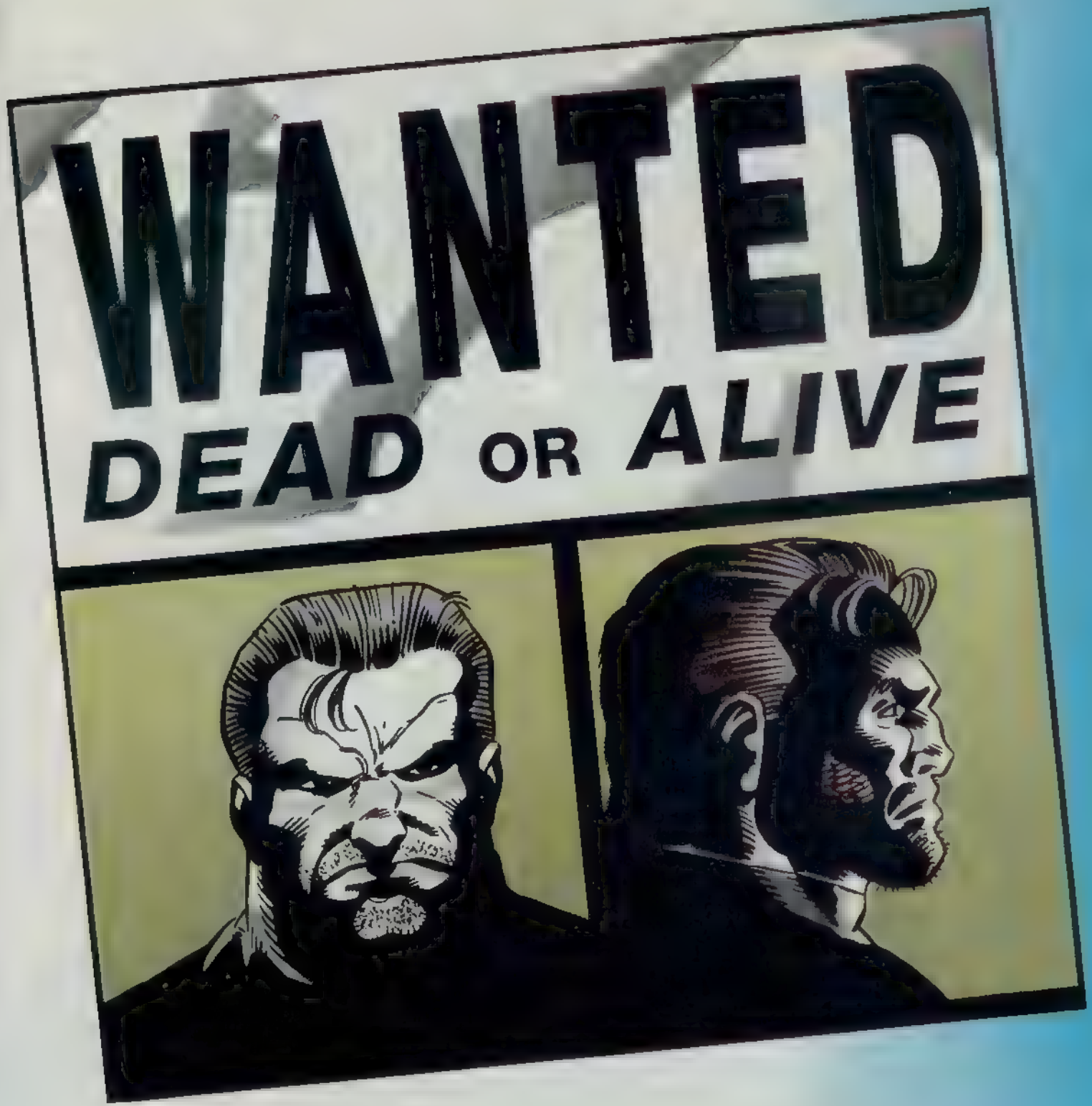
His approach to rendering the adventures of The Punisher is very realistic and, considering John's background, this is understandable. Many of today's talents list a whole passel of other comic artists as their influences; John, on the other hand, states (with a straight face) that he was influenced by Michaelangelo, Da Vinci, Rubens, and Raphael. "When I was a kid, I found an art book about Michaelangelo and began copying the pictures." Other illustrators who have influenced John include Robert Fawcett, Albert Dorne, and Al Parker, with traditional comic book illustrators Alex Raymond and Hal Foster rounding out his list. "There are so many people, I couldn't name them all," he admitted.

John approaches The Punisher with a very down-to-earth, gritty feel (in fact, it has been commented that John puts the "grit" in "gritty"). Under his capable hands, the character is as tough, hard-edged, and mean-looking as he's ever been; "a big, solid guy," John described. "I don't think he ever smiles, because I don't think he has anything to smile about." John did state that, until he began drawing The Punisher about six months or so ago, he really didn't know much about the character, but he is learning more about him every day.

"It's a whole different ball game from the old days," John said, reflecting on today's crop of grimmer titles. "In the old days you could call them comics. Today I don't know what you could call them. Today they're pretty relevant. In the old days you didn't care about social conditions or what was going on around you or anything, you just drew the comic." John feels that — in some respects — this is a good thing, because today's stories tend to reflect things that are going on in the outside world, and it makes the stories that much more interesting to the readers who can see the headlines reflected in the stories. Genial and good-natured, John noted that he is more a fan of traditional comedies than of action/adventure films, and so is somewhat amused at working on **THE PUNISHER WAR ZONE.**

Except for a brief eight-year stint during the '50s, when the comic market all but collapsed ("You couldn't buy a job then."), John has worked exclusively in comics, and he sees as a positive sign the diversity of new titles and new companies. "It's good because the competition will keep the companies on their toes. They'll try to improve the product."



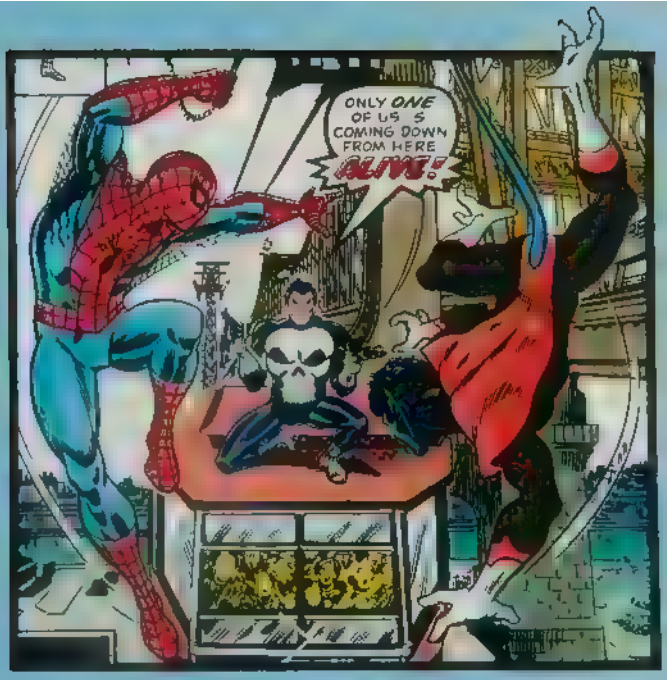


Name: Frank Castle
Aliases: "The Punisher", Frank Rook, Charles Fort, Johnny Tower, Frank Castiglione
Description: Male, Caucasian
Height: 6'3" **Weight:** 260 lbs. **Eyes:** Blue **Hair:** Black
Distinguishing Marks: Gunshot, knife and shrapnel scars distributed over majority of his body

Wanted Domestically and Internationally For: murder (including two police officers), assault, arson, illegal weapons possession (including possession of a-silencer), resisting arrest, interstate flight, impersonating a peace officer, impersonating a federal air marshal, kidnapping, vehicular homicide, unauthorized operation of aircraft, grand theft auto, destruction of city, state, and federal property

SUBJECT IS TO BE CONSIDERED ARMED AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SUBDUE OR CAPTURE SUBJECT WITHOUT SUFFICIENT BACK-UP.

Accomplices: unknown.



BACKGROUND:

The suspect has managed to erase most records of his pertinent personal history through the use of a world-wide computer virus set to red flag on any data regarding his existence. The extent of this computer sabotage has lead officials to believe that The Punisher does not operate alone, but has some type of technical back-up. Detective Mike D'Anton has been able to piece together the following brief biography:

The suspect was born in the United States to first-generation Italian-immigrant parents. His parents legally Americanized their names to "Castle" but their son chose to keep his original birth name and at the age of seventeen enlisted in the Marine Corps using the name "Castiglione."

Frank Castle served during the Southeast Asian conflicts. In between four tours of duty and while on leave, he married and had two children. His wife's name was Maria, surname unknown, his children were named Christie and Frank, Jr. Upon completion of his final tour of duty, the suspect, now using the "Castle" name, returned to the United States to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for his participation in a classified operation.

During a reunion picnic with his family in Central Park (details are sketchy at this point), a member of the suspect's family witnessed a mob execution. To protect themselves, the criminals shot the entire Castle family and left them for dead. Frank Castle survived, disappeared, and resurfaced six months later as The Punisher. It was at this time that Castle began his vigilante murder spree. His identity was confirmed during his first capture by New York City Police. Castle was brought to trial and convicted of the murder of a previously-convicted armed robber who, out on probation, was caught committing another armed robbery. In his statement to the court Castle stated, ". . .there was no justice, there was no law. Now I am the law."

His modus operandi is simple: the execution of members of the criminal population of the world. Police psychologists have determined, having examined the subject during three interments at the Ryker's Island Prison Facility, that he is unpredictable and dangerously psychotic. A matter of note is that, on two separate occasions, the suspect has surrendered to police without firing a shot. the reasons behind this have yet to be determined. In a report following the second apprehension, then-Police Commissioner Carl Potts stated, "Hell must be glistening under a sheet of ice — we just bagged The Punisher without any of us ending up in body bags. Experience, firepower and the fact that he's not bound by police restrictions were all on his side, but he gave up without so much as a dirty look.

"Now, with him off the streets, we'll find out if he's really been making our jobs harder — or easier."

In every instance the suspect's unpredictability has made it all but impossible for law enforcement agencies to deal with him effectively. Even in the charge of his murdering two police officers, it has come to light that the officers had been under investigation and were about to be indicted by the Internal Affairs division of their respective districts, Dade County, Florida and New York City.

CHRONOLOGICAL CONFIRMED INCIDENTS:

The first confirmed sighting, in New York City six months following his family's death, occurred when Castle was duped by the costumed hit-man, the Jackal, in an attempt to kill Spider-Man. Spider-Man was uninjured, the Jackal escaped, and Castle disappeared.[1] Five months later, the suspect was involved in the disruption of a New York Circle Line cruise ship. No civilian injuries were reported, and Spider-Man was again reported at the scene.[2] The suspect dropped out of sight and resurfaced two years later to hijack the Roosevelt Island tram. The X-Man called Nightcrawler was also at the scene and, with Spider-Man, rescued several passengers.[3] Castle again disappeared for one year.

He returned to stop an armed robbery at the 34th Street Armory and then committed a felony — his only reported assault on a police officer attempting to apprehend him — at the Statue of Liberty.[4]

During this time the suspect maintained an extremely low profile, as was evidenced by his disappearing for a long period of time following each confirmed incident.

His next recorded appearance marked a major change in The Punisher's M.O. This Frank Castle maintained a high profile, high visibility presence and a constant, unrelenting attack on the underworld, a "mission" that would become his trademark.

The suspect was apprehended after positive identification was made by New York State Troopers at a truck stop weigh station. Castle was held without incident, was tried and convicted of the murders of twenty men, and of the assault on two police officers during the Statue of Liberty incident. Four months later, he made his first escape from Ryker's Island, aided by an undercover government operative in an effort to enlist the Punisher in a war on the growing drug trade. The operative was found unconscious but relatively unharmed at the scene of a drug drop-off. Nine previously convicted drug dealers and one convicted juvenile offender were also found dead at the scene. Castle was presumed to have committed the murders.[5] The suspect was then involved in a confrontation with Daredevil, at which time forensic and physical evidence showed that Castle was shot by the costumed hero.[6]

The Punisher was again apprehended and remanded to Dannemora State Prison in upstate New York, awaiting the arrival of federal agents. He subsequently escaped before the agents arrived.[7] The suspect at this time acted highly psychotically, shooting at a wife-beater, a litter-bug, and a motorist who ran a red-light. Again, the suspect was arrested without incident and sent to the Marion Correctional Facility, a high-security Illinois correctional facility.[8]

Castle was transferred to Riker's Island, and 48 days later made his second escape from that facility, during a prison-wide uprising.[9] Soon after, the suspect was involved in a gun battle at Grand Central Station and on a downtown #6 subway train.[10] Castle was implicated in the execution of mafia don Tomas Santiago,[11] and was captured, only to escape two police officers. One of the arresting officers was shot dead — but not by Castle.[12]

One of the suspect's most controversial activities took place when he impersonated a social studies teacher at Malcolm Shabazz High School in an attempt to link the alleged Kingpin of crime, businessman Wilson Fisk, with the increased drug trafficking around the school. A class action suit was later filed by some of the parents of the Shabazz students, citing that having The Punisher in such close proximity to their children traumatized them. The city reportedly settled out of court for an undisclosed sum.[13]

Castle moved west and was involved in a shoot-out at a Las Vegas casino.[14] Soon thereafter, according to a U.S. Navy informant, the Punisher was involved with the theft of an experimental mini stealth submarine, although Naval officials deny any involvement.[15] He then became embroiled in an international incident that involved the mutant Wolverine and a group of now-deceased poachers in Africa.[16] Again active internationally, the Punisher was reported seen in Doctor Victor Von Doom's pocket kingdom of Latveria, and the Latverian Embassy reported to have seen the suspect, but would not provide details.[17]

Upon the suspect's return to the United States, he was instrumental in resolving a hostage situation at the offices of the Daily Bugle newspaper,[18] and soon thereafter he is believed to have been responsible for the deaths of drug producers in Hawaii.[19] He is known by police to have been involved in a neighborhood gun battle back in New York, but witnesses deny seeing anything

and charges of withholding evidence may be pending.[20] The Punisher broke up a child-pornography ring that was being run out of the St. Paradines Military Academy.[21] Following this act, for the first time in his career, the suspect killed a police officer who, it was later revealed, was about to be indicted by Dade County Police and Florida State Police Internal Affairs Divisions for involvement in a drug cartel. Castle then left the country, flew covertly to Italy, and became involved in an Italian Mafia blood feud involving surviving members of the Castiglione clan, Rocco and Esmerelda Castiglione, Frank's aunt and uncle, an incident that significantly reduced the Castiglione population.[22]

The suspect was later sighted in a Iowa at a flag burning ceremony, which he uncharacteristically broke up peacefully.[23] He and Ghost Rider caused massive property damage to F.D.R. Drive while attempting to stop a plot by travelling terrorists to introduce a new designer drug into America,[24] then Castle left the United States again. The Pentagon reported involvement by Castle in a Mid-Eastern skirmish involving a new prototype super-gun. The weapon was destroyed and Castle escaped, avoiding the arrival of U.S. Forces.[18]

The Punisher returned to the United States and was involved in the destruction of an experimental biosphere,[26] after which he was sighted at the destruction of a Siberian Oil Refinery.[27] The suspect was again arrested without incident and remanded to Riker's Island for the third time. Convicted on three counts of manslaughter, he was sentenced to ten years for each count, with parole no sooner than fifteen years. During this internment, Castle was disfigured by a mob of inmates and again escaped after an unexplained explosion tore a hole in the wall of the prison medical facility.[28] The next sighting of the escapee followed a shoot-out at the abandoned Mulberry Amusement Park in Queens, where several known associates of Wilson Fisk were found dead at the scene.[29] The suspect was again seen a month later in Chicago, in deep cover accompanied by hero for hire Luke Cage.[30]

Leaving the country and evading Interpol agents at the Docklands Airport in London, Castle travelled across Europe on a killing spree,[31] then returned to the United States and began a brutal reign of terror on the underworld.[32] He stopped a group of home invaders — ruthless criminals that break into suburban and rural homes — in Tarrytown, New York. A young child and babysitter both testified that they would have been killed if not for the suspect's intervention.[33]

The FBI reports that the suspect infiltrated the Carbone crime family and eliminated its leader. Only the daughter, Rosalie, survived. She has been unable to re-organize the family operations, and has placed a sizeable bounty on Castle's scalp.[34] Soon thereafter Castle was again involved in a Las Vegas gun-fight, this time teaming Daredevil and Nomad,[35] and was later reported in a gun-fight with a copy-cat vigilante.[36] Castle then boarded an international flight, impersonated a federal air marshal and killed known terrorist Roberto Aviar.[37]

The Punisher was involved in a small scale war with the federally-funded anti-vigilante task force V.I.G.I.L., whose acronym stands for "Vigilante Infraction General Interdiction and Limitation." Their purpose was to target all known vigilantes, but due to increased activity by The Punisher, they centralized their efforts around Castle.[38]

After this, the suspect killed the second police officer of his career. Officer Cordover has since been found by New York investigators to have been involved in extortion.[39] Castle was instrumental in averting disasters by the industrial terrorist known as The Architect,[40] and was believed to have been an integral part of breaking up the Vampire Murders ring (in tandem with Daredevil and Ghost Rider).[41] Most recently, the suspect aided NYC firefighters in a battle to stop Ray Sutherland, the industrial pyromaniac who set fire to at least twenty square blocks in the garment district. One fire fighter said "the city would have burned if not for The Punisher."[42]

The Punisher's career continues. As it does, the greatest fear any law enforcement agent may experience is that, one day, a person or persons may begin to copy his M.O., and there may be many Punishers with whom to deal.

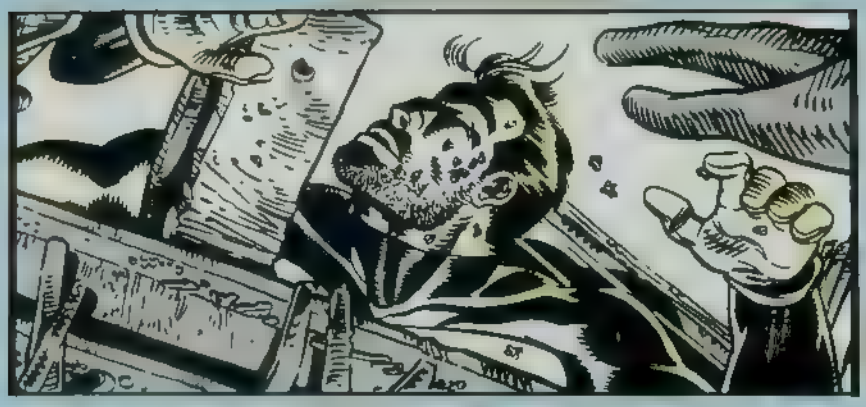
Detective Mike D'Anton is considered by the law enforcement community to be the leading expert on the career of The Punisher. His research has led him to consult a number of experts who study the super powered community, including investigative reporters Timothy Tuohy, whose primary field of expertise is the study of non-powered vigilantes, and Lynaire Brust, who is a leading expert on extraterrestrial superhumans

[FOOTNOTES]

1 THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN #129
2 THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #134 & #135
3 THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #161 & #162
4 THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #174 & #175
5 DAREDEVIL #182
6 DAREDEVIL #183 & #184
7 PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER MAN #81
8 PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #82 & #83
9 THE PUNISHER CIRCLE OF BLOOD #1
10 THE PUNISHER CIRCLE OF BLOOD #2
11 THE PUNISHER CIRCLE OF BLOOD #3
12 THE PUNISHER, CIRCLE OF BLOOD #4
13 THE PUNISHER #13
14 THE PUNISHER #20
15 THE PUNISHER #29
16 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #7 & #8
17 THE PUNISHER #29
18 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #15
19 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #17-#19
20 THE PUNISHER #36
21 THE PUNISHER #42
22 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #25-#27
23 THE PUNISHER #44
24 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #29 & #30
25 THE PUNISHER #48
26 THE PUNISHER #50
27 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #31-#33
28 THE PUNISHER #55 & #56
29 THE PUNISHER #58
30 THE PUNISHER #62
31 THE PUNISHER #64 #71
32 THE PUNISHER #72
33 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #44
34 THE PUNISHER WAR ZONE #1-#6
35 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #45-#47
36 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #49
37 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #50
38 THE PUNISHER #75
39 THE PUNISHER #81
40 THE PUNISHER WAR ZONE #17-#19
41 THE PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #57 & #58
42 THE PUNISHER #82-#84

PRO FILES

Robert J. Sodaro



HUGH HAYNES

Asked if working on a dark and gritty series like **THE PUNISHER** has adversely affected his personality, penciler Hugh Haynes lowered his normally-jovial voice slightly and responded, "Why? Want to make something of it?"

A moment later he chuckled, proving his own personality is far removed from Frank Castle's. "People find it amusing when I go to conventions and [they] find out that I'm so different. . .maybe they don't expect me to be quite as friendly." Despite the fact that he earns his living drawing a "blood and guts comic," Hugh readily admits that he is not a big fan of high-testosterone entertainment. As a matter of fact, he had to buy a stack of books on weapons since, he said, "I had never drawn a weapon when I started doing **THE PUNISHER**, and I had to go out and find out what all these things looked like." He never saw any of the *Lethal Weapon* films until they came on television, though he revealed, "I did get *Under Siege*. . . because I'm doing another bookshelf edition story that takes place on a ship, with The Punisher."

Hugh's *first* published Marvel work appeared in an issue of **F.O.O.M.**, Marvel's old fan magazine, where he had entered a contest to design a new character. Long-time comic fans will remember his work on **ALPHA FLIGHT** (back in '87), following which he worked on a couple of issues of **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS**, and eventually wound up working with Mike Baron on *Nexus*, which landed him the **PUNISHER** assignment. "When I finished the *Nexus* run, it was about the time Bill Reinhold was leaving **THE PUNISHER**, and Mike talked [Editor] Don Daley into giving me a try on **THE PUNISHER** "

His tenure on **THE PUNISHER** began with #46, when he began penciling a number of individual story arcs that led to his current work on **THE PUNISHER** and **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL**. He also penciled a bookshelf edition entitled **PUNISHER: G-FORCE**. Describing his work on **THE PUNISHER** as "setting intensive," Hugh revealed he utilizes photographs to help him achieve realistic staging, "but I will not draw the same view. I'll look at photo references to see what the buildings look like, but I'll construct the scene from my mind, using perspective blinds." He likens his work to George Perez's detail-oriented art, citing George, Marc Silvestri, and Adam Hughes as influences. "There's a lot of stuff that Jim Lee did when he was on the title that I like and I try to pick up." He went on to say that while he keeps up with the other Punisher titles, he doesn't really try to emulate the other artists' styles; ". . .If I see something that I really like that they're doing, I may pick that up."

Hugh really enjoys the grim characterizations by Mike Baron and Steven Grant. "I like telling stories, no matter who the character is The Punisher is fun because you can do a lot of moody stuff, a lot of playing with shadows, really play up the melodrama." He stated that he tends to approach his work in a more analytical, rather than emotional, way: "I read the script, see what the writer wants to try to convey in the story, and go about trying to find what the best lighting would be — the best angle, how much of the background should show, what proximity [works best] for the character, and, from a technical end, find out what would best convey that scene or sequence."

Hugh's initial art training was in abstract sculpture, from which he could only expect to get a job in teaching or in industrial design, neither of which really excited him, though he mused that, since he already had training in sculpture, and since Marvel has already licensed some porcelain bisques of their characters, it might be fun to one day try his hand at sculpting a Punisher statue.

WAR FILES

STEVEN GRANT

It took almost ten years to make an overnight success.

I first pitched Marvel a **PUNISHER** comic in 1976. I was on vacation, crashing with then-Marvel production staffer Duffy Vohland — may he rest in peace — whom I knew via fandom. To my surprise, Duffy arranged an interview for me with Marvel's editor in chief. Unprepared, and at the time not considering a career in comics, I cobbled together two proposals. One featured The Punisher.

It didn't go my way that day. I remember that when I suggested a Punisher series, the editor in chief's eyes rolled up, a reaction I got pretty used to. I walked out of Marvel as I walked in.

Two years later, Roger Stern invited me to write a **MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE** inventory story. I still wasn't planning to write comics professionally, being involved in film and music criticism, but comics paid more than criticism, one thing led to another, and here we are today. My early stint at Marvel was unremarkable, generating numerous inventory stories but no regular books and no particular notice. Like every other writer in the field, I felt compelled to make my pitch.

I wanted to write about a world where governments could be bought out from under the noses of their citizens, where the people charged with upholding the law were often the same people who broke it, where vulnerability was an inbred condition and death was mundane, sordid, and sudden. The Punisher's world.

In the late '70s, Marvel began doing mini-series, and I wanted to do The Punisher. I had the story I'd come up with in 1976, which eventually became the **PUNISHER** limited series #2-5. But at the time, The Punisher was frowned on by most of the Marvel staff. They were repulsed by his violence, offended by his murky moral stance. I withheld my Punisher proposal, and pitched other ideas. Without success. Under Jim Shooter, Marvel was clearly going in one direction and I was going in another.

Every so often, I'd suggest a Punisher mini-series. Editors wanted nothing to do with it. In 1984, that changed, thanks to Mike Zeck.

I'd worked with Mike on **MARVEL TEAM-UP**, though we didn't have much contact afterward. But I'd watched his art turn phenomenal on stints on **MASTER OF KUNG FU** and **CAPTAIN AMERICA** as he turned into arguably the best action artist in comics. When he came off **SECRET WARS**, I called him to pitch him on The Punisher.

Odd coincidences happen. Just before I called, Mike and his regular inker, John Beatty, were discussing what they wanted to do next. It came down to one character — The Punisher — five minutes before I called. As we talked, Mike and I discovered we had *exactly* the same take on the character: A taciturn, driven figure who nonetheless was hyper-rational, almost to the point of insanity. There was no way he wasn't the toughest guy on the face of the Earth, because his survival depended on it. And ours. Mike, John, and I joined forces.

And I learned a lesson: it's much easier to sell a project with an artist attached. Particularly an artist in demand.

Carl Potts was one of the few editors I hadn't pitched to. He wanted to establish a "suite" of top artists, and I knew he was a martial arts and action-adventure aficionado. He'd have

probably let us do **MILLIE THE MODEL** if we'd wanted to, but Carl was particularly open to **THE PUNISHER**. It was the sort of material he wanted to be associated with, opening up Marvel to a new range of action material.

Not all of Marvel was enthusiastic. Jim Shooter okayed the project (mostly as a favor to Mike, who had drawn Jim's **SECRET WARS**), but I remember he said it was on Carl's head. A senior member of Marvel's sales staff informed me, a bit shrilly, that Marvel's audience would have no interest in the adventures of "a murdering psychopath," and the project was a waste of Marvel's money and resources. Carl stared down the opposition. Thanks, Carl.

In light of this, Mike and I knew we had to retool The Punisher, quickly. We wouldn't get a second chance.

The Punisher had no real name. We provided one. Previous writers had battered his character into uselessness. We ignored them and moved on. Mike wanted to draw a prison setting. I wanted a tight, spare style. We wanted him outnumbered in an impossible situation, to demonstrate his intelligence and skill and refusal to accept defeat. We wanted people to know The Punisher could think his way out of a situation or muscle his way through it, no matter what the apparent odds. Despite being on opposite sides of the country, Mike and I functioned as a single unit in a way I've never experienced with another artist. There's no way I can give him the level of credit he deserves. It wasn't "my" project and it wasn't "his" project. It was our project, and there's still no one I'd rather work with.

Somehow we muddled through, and, with the help of Carl, John Beatty, Ken Bruzenak, and Phil Zimelmann, got **THE PUNISHER** limited series #1 on the stands. Marvel still viewed the project askance, and released it with little promotion. Orders on that first issue were healthy, but not huge.

Within two hours of release, **THE PUNISHER** limited series #1 sold out virtually everywhere in the country. That weekend Marvel's order lines were flooded with reorder attempts. By Monday, the series was pronounced a bona fide hit, and the promotion department abruptly shifted gears to push the rest of the mini-series hard. This is the way legends are born. Everyone pretty much knows the rest of it.

One additional comment: it's commonly thought that The Punisher clicked because it was violent. The day it came out, one clerk in a comics shop in Santa Monica raved about how all these people get killed in the first issue. I opened his copy — they had none left for sale by the time I got there — and dared him to show me where one single person died in that issue. In fact, no one does. We didn't make The Punisher successful by having him kill people, we made The Punisher successful by giving him action appropriate to the character. That's all the audience really wants: action appropriate to the characters they read. Which is, I think, the reason that so many "grim'n'gritty" (a term I loathe) revivals and revamps have floundered, while The Punisher rolls on. Grimness and grittiness are inappropriate to most characters in comics, but a dark world view is the essence of The Punisher. Mercy bullets, indeed!

Eight years have passed since the publication of the **PUNISHER** mini-series, and I don't know what else I can say. Except this. To all those editors over the years who were pitched The Punisher and passed, petty though it may be, I've waited years to say:

I told you so.

After walking out of Marvel as he walked in, Steven Grant got his first professional comics assignment writing for **Star* Reach** *and* **Imagine**, *followed by* **MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #52**. *His credits also include* **THE AVENGERS**, **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN**, *First's* **Whisper**, *Dark Horse's* Enemy *and* Badlands, *and his favorite "off-the-wall" credit —* **THE LIFE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**. *He has also written Hardy Boys and Tom Swift novels, and he has been a critic for* Trouser Press *and* Video Magazine.

THE ART OF

Most people give the initial credit for The Punisher's creation to Ross Andru. Ross gives the credit to John Romita, Sr., who gives credit to Len Wein and Gerry Conway, who give credit to other people. Some say Mike Zeck, who developed a new approach in the **PUNISHER** limited series, recreated the character. Mike gives the credit to writer Steven Grant.

Any serious discussion of the origins of Marvel's foremost and forearmed vigilante must recognize that there is no single creator. Anyone who has ever worked on The Punisher brought with him a perspective touched by a world suffering from a serious crime problem. Each creator took images from the newspapers and televisions that had gone, up until Frank Castle, unchallenged and unpunished, and created a character whose potential is still being discovered.

In the twenty years The Punisher has been a part of the Marvel Universe, each artist brought with him something unique to the character — something of their own fears, their own judgments, and their own cathartic desires for vindication.

THE TRADEMARK

John Romita, Sr., the first artist ever to draw The Punisher (based on a rough sketch by Gerry Conway), said, "My job was

WAR

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN artist Ross Andru was the first person to portray The Punisher in a comic book story [LEFT], but it was Marvel Art Director John Romita, Sr., who first developed the character's trademark look [RIGHT]. "The eyes of the skull were in conjunction with his pectorals," Romita noted. "The skull's cheeks were his rib cage. The nose was the base of his breastbone."

to come up with a character and costume for a villain to be called either The Executioner or The Grim Reaper. Right away, I started playing images of a skull on the chest. I was concerned, however, that this character would look too much like The Black Terror, a masked vigilante hero from the pulps. So I made the skull huge, covering his whole chest.

"The eyes of the skull were in conjunction with his pectorals. The skull's cheeks were his rib cage. The nose was the base of his breastbone. And, of course, the skull's teeth made up his belt

"It's funny, really, when you think about it. The first anti-hero was probably Batman. It seems like when heroes put masks on, they broke from the Superman tradition and became anti-heroes. In the case of The Punisher, I wanted him to break with villain tradition. I like to think of him as the first anti-villain. He didn't wear a mask, and no one really knew on which side of the fence he was.

"There are actually a number of things that didn't make it into the costume that originally appeared in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129," Romita continued. "First of all, I wanted The Punisher to have a scar on his face. A man as emotionally scarred as he was seemed likely to be scarred externally as well. This was voted down pretty early in the process. I think Gerry or Len wanted him to look fine, so that all the scarring was psychological.

Mike Zeck noted, "All the terrible things he'd seen himself and others do needed to be reflected in those eyes."

"In addition, I wanted the skull to go around his head, not just his chest. I still have no idea why it didn't show up that way in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #129."

When asked about that very question, Ross Andru, who penciled the first appearance of The Punisher, said, "I did exactly what John Romita did. Someone, somewhere must have changed it. My approach to The Punisher was less determined by the character than the time period in which he showed up. It was a period in which comics were much less cinemagraphic than they are today. At that point, I was being told that he had to be like most of the other Marvel characters, so I drew him "straight" — always in full figure, and always with a sense of ethical righteousness about him."

When asked how he might pencil The Punisher today, Andru answered, "I'd definitely make him more menacing. Physically, he'd be much more dangerous. The thing, I think, that makes people love this character is that he tends to make the reader feel safe. So I'd put in loads of explosions, noise, and as many big weapons as possible. I'd also play up the scenes, make them more moody — steam rising from sewers, poor street corner lighting and the like. Basically comics, like movies, are about mood. Graphically, The Punisher is much more interesting than Superman. I mean, I'm not even sure if Superman should be around anymore. I do know that if I ever returned to comics, The Punisher's one of the character's I'd like to do."

THE OBSESSIVE LOOK

Former **PUNISHER** Editor Carl Potts, who later wrote and provided art breakdowns for the character in PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL, mentioned that The Punisher remained a second-string Spider-Man guest-star character until he appeared in both **DAREDEVIL** and the fifteenth **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL**. The common denominator in both cases was the art team of Frank Miller and Klaus Janson. "Miller's version set a new, darker tone for the character," Potts commented. "It's this tone that the writers to follow picked up on."

Frank Miller's approach to The Punisher was both an homage and a psychological insight into what a vigilante of this sort would be like. "I did him like Joe Kubert would have — both lean and lethal. In comparison to the the other heroes and villains, I wanted to make him more slender than most, indicating his obsessive personality. That obsession was something I especially wanted to capture in Frank's face. It needed to be gaunt. He needed to look haunted."

Miller's approach led to a Punisher limited series. "Crime was on the increase," Potts explained. "And public opinion had just shifted to the right. The Punisher suddenly became much more reality-based. He lost his mercy bullets. He lost his cool. But became more consistent. And became a cathartic release for those people feeling like nothing could be done in light of the grip that crime had on the country."

The limited series, penciled by Mike Zeck, led to The Punisher becoming one of the most popular characters in the Marvel Universe. Potts explained that, "Zeck's take on Castle really set the tone for all the other artists to follow. Now he had a body much larger than how Frank Miller drew him. The top of the skull also seemed to change. It now seemed like the top of a heart — that's the one change that I really didn't care for."

Zeck, who credits Steven Grant for the success of the character, described The Punisher as "basically dead. We took a dead character and made him deader. The man watched his family die, and is now a walking corpse, trying to take as many criminals down with him as he can.

"I think the only thing I may have changed in the series is his eyes. I shifted them. I've been heavily influenced by Joe

Kubert's "Enemy Ace" issues for DC and wanted to bring in that killer-of-the-sky's same deep-set eyes. The Punisher needed to look like a killer. All the terrible things he'd seen himself and others do needed to be reflected in those eyes.

"Clint Eastwood in *The Outlaw Josie* Wales was also a big influence. I think that if The Punisher does have a super power, it's his reputation He's got a look, a scowl like Clint's, that's like a hypnotic intimidation. You can especially see what I mean when you look at the first issue of the limited series."

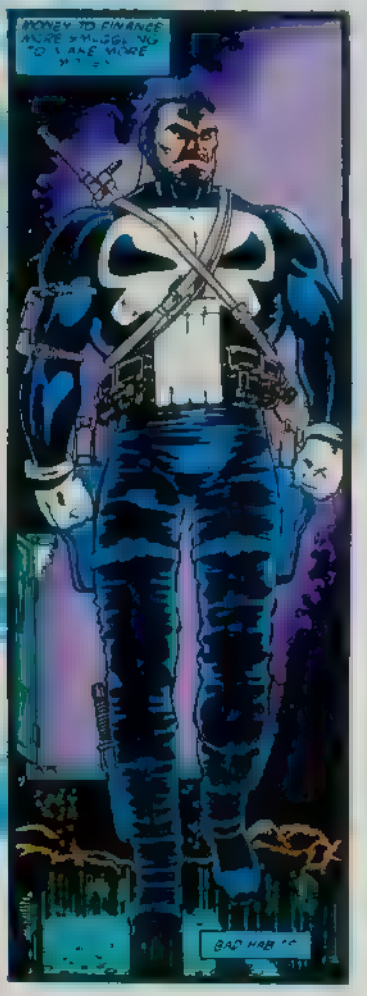
After the success of the limited series, the **PUNISHER** was relaunched as an ongoing monthly title written by Mike Baron and drawn by Klaus Janson. This time penciling and inking, Klaus was able to give The Punisher a distinctive look.

"I was most influenced by the work I did with Frank Miller on DAREDEVIL. At the time, I also really wanted to make him look different, adding on to what had been started in the limited series. So, I made everything unlimited. Everything about The Punisher became big. In fact, everything was almost twice the size of what it really was. This was necessary to convince people of how psychotic this guy really was."

"Second of all, he needed to be dirty. If the war's dirty, well, there you go. I think issue #2 was the first time The Punisher actually appeared and fought out of his costume. For example, in issue #2, The Punisher almost branded his own chest with the skull image. Since then, he's been scarred, burned, and turned black and white in a few issues' time, and now even has Punisher Armor. Look at how we opened up all kinds of visual opportunities for change."

Following Klaus, a young artist named Whilce Portacio followed in the footsteps of Frank Miller by drawing a very lean, very small Frank Castle. Whilce went on to pencil the death of Micro Chip's son

"When I draw the Punisher, I want to fit him with as much stuff as humanly possible. . ."



Mark Texeira's Punisher "was pure energy" **[ABOVE]**, Hugh Haynes portrayed him as a walking armory **[RIGHT]**. Jim Lee, John Romita, Jr., and Bill Reinhold each offered their own unique approach and style **[NEXT PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM]**.

STUBBLE AND SCARS

Mark Texeira and Bill Reinhold were two artists who took a different, more sense-oriented approach to The Punisher. Assistant Editor Tim Touhy explained, "Bill drew one of my favorite Punishers. When I looked at his work, I could feel the stubble on Frank Castle's chin. I could feel the cold metal of his gun.

"Tex took a different approach. Tex's Punisher was pure energy — all form and motion. His art seemed to actually move." It was Eric Larsen who began drawing The Punisher with scars (an idea that John Romita, Jr. took to the limit in the pages of PUNISHER WAR ZONE).

Following the success of the first ongoing monthly, Carl Potts and Jim Lee began a second monthly series called **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL.** It was here, Potts explains, that the character became visually a bit more consistent. "I was writing and, in early issues, doing breakdowns for Jim Lee. Basically, our approach was to do the definitive Punisher — to create a standard for the industry to follow."

John Romita, Jr., however, argues that it wasn't the political nature of the country that determined The Punisher's look. Nor was it the lack of visual standards Romita explained that it was purely an editorial decision: "Basically the differences in The Punisher's appearance can be traced to the differences in editor-in-chiefs. Sure, Mike Zeck gave us the definitive look, but Tom DeFalco opened up a whole lot of opportunities for new artists to play."

"The Punisher's not Superman. He's not from Krypton. And his only weakness, his family, was taken from him long ago. I mean, let's face it. He's been beaten on for at least twenty years now, not including the time he was a Marine. He's been shot at, cut, blown up, burned. God knows the damage that's been done to him

"I refused to draw a straight nose," Romita added. Anyone in his position would have had it busted a long time ago. The more I busted him up, the more he began to look like people I know, family. I'm Italian and that's how I related to him.

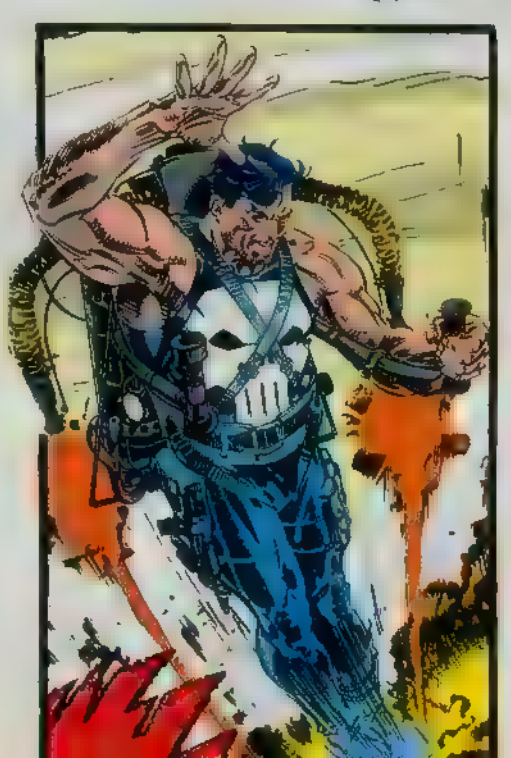
"Basically, I think I added personality to his look. I gave him a whole set of bandages, which, unfortunately, disappeared as soon as I was off the book. Not that change is such a bad thing. I mean, the fact that his chest emblem is always changing leaves a lot of room for an artist to play."

When artist Hugh Haynes came on the book, it was a dream-come-true for him. "I just wanted to emulate Jim Lee. He gave a look that was so distinctive. I think it was the armory and pouches and stuff Frank Castle walked around with. So when I draw Punisher, I want to fit him with as much stuff as is humanly possible for a guy like him to carry. So I created straps and buckles to help him carry his equipment. It's really an issue of realism. When I first got the job, I went out and rented movies with hi-tech weaponry just to get a feel for what I was doing," he said.

In recent years, The Punisher's been seen in a totally new light. In a storyline that brought back Luke Cage to the Marvel Universe, The Punisher actually changed his skin color to that of a black man. In other issues, he donned both hi-tech armor and scuba gear.

"Every performer brings with him or her his own unique packages of realities of vision," said George Lucas when asked about special effects and story telling. Each creator brought something new and different to the man called Frank Castle. As long as there is crime, especially crime which touches each one of us on a personal level, there will be need for punishment. And until justice in this world is achieved, there will be The Punisher.

*Jim Krueger works as a copywriter in the Advertising and Promotions Department of Marvel Comics. Watch for his first story in **EXCALIBUR #75**.*



THE PUNISHER 2099

New York, 2099.

Crime? Rampant. Punishment? Pay a fine, get off free. Police? A for-profit organization called the Public Eye. Police protection? Not if you fall behind in your monthly payments. Law and order? If you can afford it.

In a society gone mad, justice must be even crazier. Enter Lieutenant Jake Gallows — his family murdered, their killer set free. Jake decided to take the law into his own hands. He is justice. He is crazier. And he is The Punisher 2099

IN THE BEGINNING. . .

PUNISHER 2099 is one of Marvel's five 2099 titles, alongside **SPIDER-MAN 2099, RAVAGE 2099, DOOM 2099, X-MEN 2099,** and **2099 UNLIMITED,** with **SPIDER-MAN 2099 ANNUAL** and **BLACK PANTHER 2099** set for 1994 Just over a year old, 2099 has proven itself to be one of Marvel's most successful launches ever. Editor Joey Cavalieri remembers: "When I arrived at Marvel, 2099 was just an idea. It wasn't even 2099, it was alternately 2091, 2093, 2193. . .the basic idea was for two books, the Spider-Man of the future and a new

character created by Stan Lee, called Ravage, set in the Marvel World of Tomorrow as proposed by Stan. Editor in chief Tom DeFalco said 'I also want a Punisher 2099,' so he was in place from day one."

But 2099 needed definition. "When I got here the day after Labor Day, 1991," Joey said, "I just sat here in my new, nearly empty office and banged out what that new world should be. I put in Alchemax, I put in the Public Eye. Basically I tried to keep the world futuristic while at the same time avoiding traditional comic book 'future' clichés, [to] give the writers a lot of raw material to create with. I handed that outline to a plethora of writers and asked for proposals. Competition was fierce; they were all very good, but with each book there was one proposal that stood out head and shoulders above the rest. With The Punisher it was Pat and Tony's."

Pat Mills came to 2099 with an extensive science fiction resume that included *Slain*, *Judge Dredd* for the English magazine *2000 A.D.*, and *Marshall Law*. That helped him and Tony Skinner, his writing partner of five years, to further define the bleak world of 2099 as one run by giant multinational corporations; no government as we know it; no aid to the needy; personal freedom a thing of the past

"Good science fiction has always been written as a metaphor of the day," Mills explained. "I see 2099 as an extrapolation of our world today. If things keep going the way they're going, this is the world we'll end up with." Skinner echoed," "It's a logical extension. ..a combination of technology, politics, religion and business all founded on basic human nature." The idea of a lawless society springs from this. "You see it every day," Pat said "If you've got money, you can afford the best lawyers. Someone who's wealthy or important can get away with murder. Now in the future it seems likely, in fact I'd say inevitable, that justice will be prescribed in that way." Said Joey, "As much as I'd like to believe in this General Motors, futurama, world's fair kind of future, I just don't see it happening."

THE PUNISHER TIMES TEN

Given these surroundings, it was obvious that this Punisher had to be much more than driven — he had to be nuts. Tony Skinner explained, "We started off by saying, 'this isn't comics, this is real, Jake is real.' Then we established the parameters of his character, his life, and modus operandi We realized that what we came up with was a psycho. An ordinary, regular, fairly smart guy whose had a major kick in the psychological butt." Joey Cavalieri sees more to it than that: "It's been said that he's clinically insane, but I'm not so sure. The only thing that makes him insane is that he's got a gun and he enjoys using it. Clearly this is not a healthy personality, but at least Jake sees the inequity of the system, and sets out to specifically change the balance of that system." Does that make Jake Gallows a hero? "I have a problem with the concept of a hero being a moral icon," Pat replied, "because: (A) real people aren't like that and, (B) it's boring. Vulnerable people, people who have been marred by life are far more interesting. We sympathize and identify a great deal with Jake and don't feel that what he's doing is wrong because, in that society, he has no choice but to behave in that particular way. We may not agree with him but we must understand his rationale so we can suspend disbelief and get behind him. So no, I don't see Jake as a super hero."

"He's justice times ten," Joey proffered, "With the volume cranked up past ten, to twelve, to thirteen. . .I sometimes think he's a little more sadistic than he has to be but he's there to provide an emotional catharsis to the readers who feel that they're already living in a world where justice is bought cheap or unavailable to them."

JAKE VS. FRANK

Jake Gallows and Frank Castle — both desire to see justice served and both use big guns to serve it, but as far as Pat and Tony are concerned, that's where the similarity ends. Said Tony, "Frank Castle is great fun to write but as a human being he's somewhat limited — a little too humorless and 'flat.'" We wrote a Punisher story for a **PUNISHER SUMMER SPECIAL** a couple years back and we just felt there was so much more we'd like him to say and feel. When we got our hands on **PUNISHER 2099,** we saw Jake Gallows as a great opportunity to flesh out Castle's basic character."

"Jake is constantly evolving," Pat added. ". . .He may get nastier, he may get nicer but all the time he will evolve as a person; he won't be a guy who enters a situation, interacts with it then comes out unchanged." A major difference between Gallows and Castle is their targets: "Jake goes after bigger, corporate villains," Pat explained, "Frank Castle is more restricted in his targets, most of which are traditional 'street scum.' How do you keep on coming up with new, different criminals for him to fight?"

HARDWARE

PUNISHER 2099 readers seem to really enjoy his vast arsenal of high-tech weapons. Concerning a weapon called a Needle Gun which shoots a razor-sharp projectile that once lodged inside the victim moves straight to their heart, one fan wrote, "You guys are either insane or creative geniuses." Jake Gallows arsenal currently includes:

- High-density plasto-armor which absorbs most energy blasts.
- A .48-caliber Stark-Fujikawa Street Pacifier machine gun.
- An electronic Exo-Muscular Endosuit which moves his body in any pre-programmed manner, making Jake an expert in all forms of hand-to-hand combat
- "Mean-mule" turbo-powered steel boots.
- The HD Stealth Stinger motorcycle, capable of up to 800 m.p.h., cloaked with holographic projectors that render it invisible It is keyed in to computer-controlled traffic patterns to avoid traffic delays.
- "Grenazer" smart-targeting hand grenades which don't stop until their target is destroyed.

"The only thing that makes him insane is that he's got a gun and he enjoys using it."

- An old-fashioned .54-caliber Smith & Wesson handgun (circa 2015) — the last and most powerful handgun ever built, capable of shooting 240 rounds per minute or 4 per second.
- Jake's favorite weapon, the Power Bat — with variable density that can be adjusted from rubber softness to titanium hardness.

"We're both very interested in high-tech weaponry," Pat revealed, "but certainly the most ingenious of these come from Tony, he fantasizes about these things. But to the best of my knowledge he does not yet have a Micro Chip-style basement where he constructs these things!"

"I'm really just a big kid," Tony admitted, "I like to come up with a gimmick and then say, 'how would that work?' I can't stand not to know things, if something interests me, I've got to know how that works. I really like the smart-targeting idea because in the future people wouldn't just have bigger guns they'd have better guns; ones that didn't miss. It drives me crazy in science fiction movies when two guys are shooting it out with lasers and missing, as if they were using old-fashioned six-shooters! I've met some pretty weird people and been in some strange situations I've known people in M.I.6 and British counter-intelligence and I've gotten a lot of my ideas from them. I'm always thinking about that kind of stuff."

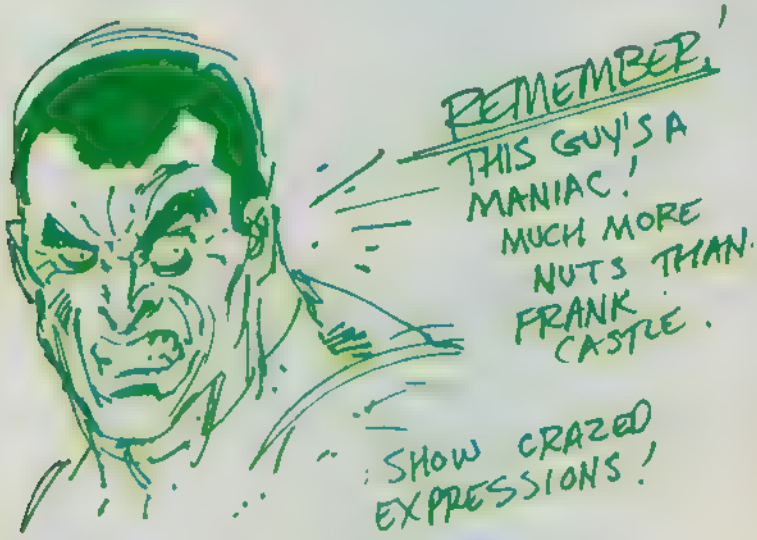
But Tony isn't alone in the mayhem department. "The Power Bat was one of mine," admitted Pat, "I didn't think simply punching someone in the face was enough, I liked the idea of a baseball bat. So we just made it high-tech with settings from rubber to titanium, though The Punisher rarely uses those lower settings. I also felt very strongly about having him use an old-fashioned Smith & Wesson hand gun because there's something very unsatisfying about a laser beam; you don't really feel they're going in the body. This 'ginormous' weapon is much more satisfying, more visceral, and it also harkens back to an older age of crime and punishment which Jake is very fond of."

THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE

There is still a spark of humanity left within Jake Gallows which prevents him from becoming completely insane. Unfortunately that same humanity may have the opposite effect and cause his insanity. Pat elaborates, "His insanity will develop in an entertaining and interesting way. As Jake, his humanity will cause him to feel alienated from The Punisher's actions. He will ultimately develop a split personality which has tremendous dramatic potential. One of the things we intend to do is have Jake start talking about The Punisher as another person. He'll start saying things like, 'I couldn't do this but The Punisher can,' or 'I've got to tell The Punisher about this,' and. . .who knows? They might even end up leaving notes for each other. As Jake, his humanity will surface and as The Punisher, the avenging monster will become even stronger." Joey thinks The Punisher should continue to move forward. "I think he should continue to understand that subtracting people from the environment isn't all that he's about, and that his mere presence is having an effect that he isn't aware of yet. He is bringing attention to himself Maybe there are mysterious forces conspiring against him, maybe to help him."

"I want people to be behind what Jake stands for, what he's fighting for," Pat concluded, "A sense of outrage at a corrupt system and support for him no matter how twisted he may seem. I think that huge, multinational corporations are extremely dangerous forces in society and if, in some small way, it makes readers think about these forces and identify them as the enemy. . .then I think that's very worthwhile. Many readers will just think of **PUNISHER 2099** as an action/drama comic book without seeing the subtexts. It's not just about fantasmic weapons, it's about somebody whose fighting the system and saying, 'the establishment stinks '"

"All I want," Tony added, "is for the readers to feel entertained, intrigued and somewhat provoked. Comics are about escapism, I want to give the readers a respite from their everyday lives We're entertainers, not teachers — our messages are human ones; we don't want to change the world or teach the world to sing we just want to give people something to think about." And what does Joey think? "I want the fans to have a sense of righting the wrongs of the world, protecting the innocent and having faith in justice. 2099 is a license to create We've gotten a bunch of talented guys together here. . .and what they've come up with is just incredible."



Matt Morra should know the inner workings of the 2099 universe. In addition to being a regular contributor to ***MARVEL AGE*** *and the* ***MARVEL AGE*** *specials, he is Joey Cavalieri's assistant editor, and edited the recent* ***2099 SKETCHBOOK****.*

PRO FILES

— *Benjamin Raab*

GARY KWAPISZ

You've got to learn storytelling on your own. It's good for an artist to go to art school, just to be around other people for influence, but you have to develop your talents by yourself," said **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL** illustrator Gary Kwapisz, explaining the important lesson which assists him with his craft even today.

"I've always been a big comics fan," he noted. A former student of the Center For Creative Studies in Detroit, Kwapisz left the art program after only a year and a half to enter the field as a visual storyteller In 1982 he landed the job as a regular illustrator for Marvel's humor title **CRAZY MAGAZINE.** According to Gary, this invaluable opportunity helped his abilities to mature not only during the actual task of penciling, but also as a result of the experience of working as a team player. "I learned a lot from [**CRAZY** Editor] Larry [Hama] during that time," Kwapisz claimed. "He knew how to tell a story visually, exactly how to get the message he wanted across, and he could even explain it, too, panel by panel. Not too many people. . .can do that. It really helped."

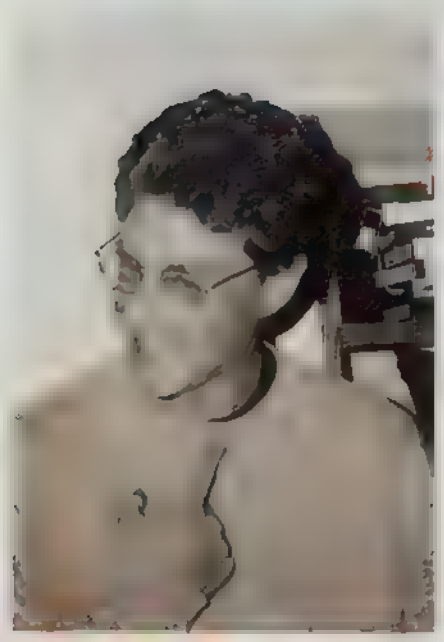
Then, in 1983, Kwapisz altered his artistic course and cast his illustrative gauntlet into the arena of **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN.** Tackling the environs of the Hyborian Era proved a welcome and fitting challenge for this aficionado of fantasy artists Frank Frazetta and John Buscema. "I enjoyed Conan," Kwapisz reminisced. "It had a real hard edge. I'd love to do a Conan project again sometime." It was also during this brief, albeit productive, period that Kwapisz established what has, ever since, been a lasting association with present **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL** collaborator, Chuck Dixon. "Chuck's stories are *great!*" he praised, excited about their partnership on the **WAR JOURNAL.**

Kwapisz also displays his enthusiasm for this project through his opinion of **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL** star Frank Castle. He sees The Punisher as a "logical character" not only within the Marvel Universe, but as a figure believable within the often senseless real world. "The Punisher is a psychopath," he admitted unabashedly, "But, in his own way, he deals with the harshness of reality [more than some other characters]. I like that."

Being a seasoned artist with credits at DC and Eclipse as well as at Marvel, Kwapisz realizes that in order to keep The Punisher a solid character, he must stay alert to how his own shortcomings may affect the book, while never losing sight of his positive qualities. So, even as Gary sharpens his inking skills — an area that he will readily confess needs improvement — he relies on his ability to tell visually diverse stories to keep the audience riveted. Gary understands that the book's success depends on his capacity to "change according to the changes which are taking place in the field at the time."

So, if the sum of experiences defines a person, then Gary Kwapisz is, by definition, one of the more experienced artists in comics today, thanks in part to a mosaic list of influences, and a mix of formal and personal training. Gary bases his career on one crucial axiom — the lasting importance of artistic scrutiny and maturity. This introspective approach provides a potent reminder for any budding artist that, in addition to raw ability, an illustrator must also develop a sound philosophy.

WAR FILES



MIKE BARON

When Carl Potts asked me if I'd write the regular **PUNISHER** series in 1987, I took about twenty minutes to think it over. I'd always been fascinated with crime fiction. And, of course, I was familiar with Gerry Conway's creation and Steven Grant's realistic mini-series.

Hell, yes. It was a priceless opportunity to inject contemporary excitement into a monthly comic book. The Punisher was a killing machine, distilled essence of vigilante. He had no super powers, but relied instead on tech weaponry. I began ripping stories out of the newspapers. The first two issues dealt with the international coke trade and, surprisingly, no members of the Cali cartel came forward to complain that they were receiving bad press.

Drug crimes were so overwhelming and pervasive, I could have done five years' worth of issues simply detailing Frank Castle's efforts to derail the international coke trade. Hardly a day went by that I didn't learn of several drug-related crimes, from drive-by shootings right here in Wisconsin to the apprehension of bulk cocaine aboard freighters in the Gulf of Mexico. Many stories were based on real incidents. One of my favorites, "Border Run" (#43), was based on the case of a Mexican doctor who'd been instrumental in the torture death of an American DEA agent. DEA agents kidnapped the doctor and brought him to the United States to stand trial. The Mexican government objected to foreign nationals staging a kidnapping of a Mexican citizen, and the doctor's been traded back across the border.

Of course, The Punisher isn't bothered by such niceties. Much of his appeal lies in the fact that he's able to resolve messy real-life situations with a couple of well-placed shots or a concussion grenade.

I get a lot of stories from *The New York Times*. Issue #41 was inspired by a gorgeous photo in the Sunday magazine showing the New York City water system. Bill Reinhold's drawing of the pumping station three hundred feet beneath Central Park is from that photograph. I see such a photo and I think, *this would be a good place for Frank to blow somebody's brains out.*

Issues #4 and #5, drawn by Klaus Janson, were essentially a history of the Jonestown Massacre, with The Punisher thrown in to trip up the good reverend. I would often just take some horrendous crime and add The Punisher at the end for Sophoclean justice. Thus, in issues #12 and #13, drawn by Whilce Portacio, The Punisher busted Charles Manson out of jail so he could kill him.

I also tried to use what little I've learned about the martial arts, and have tried to bring a sense of realism to The Punisher's fights. For really great fight scenes, check out Roger Salick's too infrequent contributions. I also shot a lot of guns belonging to friends. I don't own any guns, but I shoot them. Eliot Brown's **PUNISHER ARMORIES** are gospel. Other excellent sources include the complete set of *Combat and Survival (What It Takes to Fight and Win)*, a set of twenty-two volumes published by H.S. Stuttman of Westport, CT, and featuring articles on everything from how to fly a Warthog to how to

keep cool in the desert by digging a trench and laying in your own urine. Indispensible stuff! Still, I had the feeling in ordering this that I was about a half step away from a subscription to *World Star*.

There's a publishing house called Loompanics which offers the paranoid survivalist's dream library. I imagine Frank has every book they offer, including *Killer Instinct (Unarmed Combat for Street Survival)*, *Deception Detection (Winning the Polygraph Game)*, *Up Yours! (A Guide to Advanced Revenge Techniques)*, and *How to Hide Anything*, to name but a few.

The Punisher was mostly a loner, but occasionally he'd interact with the Marvel Universe, such as issues #14–#18, chronicling his frustrating, inconclusive fight with the Kingpin, and #10, his bout with Daredevil which carried over into Daredevil's own mag that month. In #28 and #29, he gave Doc Doom grief and escaped intact, and in issues #33 and #34, he had a knock-down, drag-out fight with the Reavers. About a year before, I'd asked Chris Claremont if I could borrow Wolverine for a **PUNISHER** appearance. No problem. But by the time I finally got around to doing it, Wolverine was *hors de combat*, so we ended up with the Reavers and I thought it was one of our best stories.

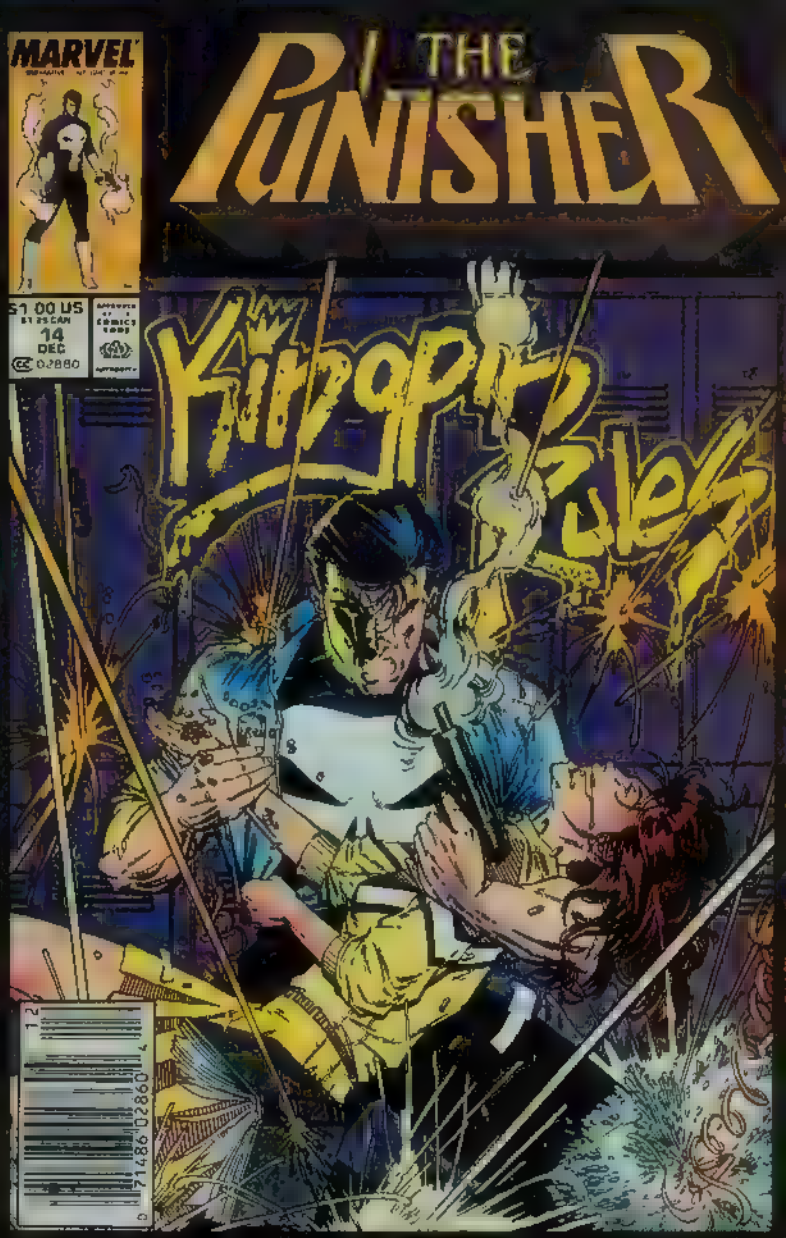
When Don Daley asked if I'd write the **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL**, it took me about ten minutes to say "yes." The first three issues, "The Sicilian Saga," established a bit more about Frank's background — his real name was Castiglione and he came from Sicily. It also gave me the opportunity to create a new nemesis, the Saracen. Trying to keep the stories realistic has been a tricky business. I have tried to portray Saracen with dignity and deep religious convictions. I won't like it when Frank kills him.

In a timing coup which is still spoken of in hushed whispers within the Marvel offices, we put Frank in Baghdad two days after the Gulf War began (#47 and #48). This story was loosely inspired by the real life inventor Gerald Bull, who was in the process of setting up an Iraqui supergun when he was assassinated by Mossad agents. In the end, I simply replaced the Mossad with Frank. Okay, we had to call Iraq "Trafia" to avoid angering the huge Iraqui lobby, but at least we got to use Saddam Hussein!

Probably the best story we did (and I have to say this because it cost fifteen bucks when it first came out) was *Intruder*, which established Frank's brief fling with the priesthood, and his infiltration of a paramilitary organization smuggling drugs into the country. Part of the inspiration came from an old Dick Tracy strip I remember reading when I was a child. There was a gang of highly evolved thieves whose hang-out was on top of a chimney butte in the Utah desert. Dick had to parachute in. It was so dim in my memory, I hardly cringed in borrowing the idea. Also, on page 25, we blow up the vile Ramada O'Hare, which had been the site of the Chicago Comic Convention for the previous eight years. I had to fight Carl over the ending — he wanted something more upbeat. But in the end I prevailed, and history was made.

Working on The Punisher has been a bloody, bruising, filthy, disgusting, degrading enterprise. I'm glad I had the opportunity.

Mike Baron worked for various newspapers in Boston and Madison, WI, before breaking into comics in 1981 with Nexus, which he co-created with artist Steve Rude. He has written extensively for many publishers including Pacific, First, and DC. His first work at Marvel was a series of historical stories for **AMAZING HIGH ADVENTURE**. *He has created several titles and characters including* **SPYKE** *(with artist Bill Reinhold) and* **FEUD** *(with Mark Nelson) for the Epic Comics "Heavy Hitters," and The Badger, a hero suffering from multiple personality disorder, which will once again be published in August 1994 by Dark Horse. Baron is currently working on a Punisher graphic novel with Bill Reinhold. His hobbies include snorkling, skydiving, alligator wrestling, and stand-up comedy.*



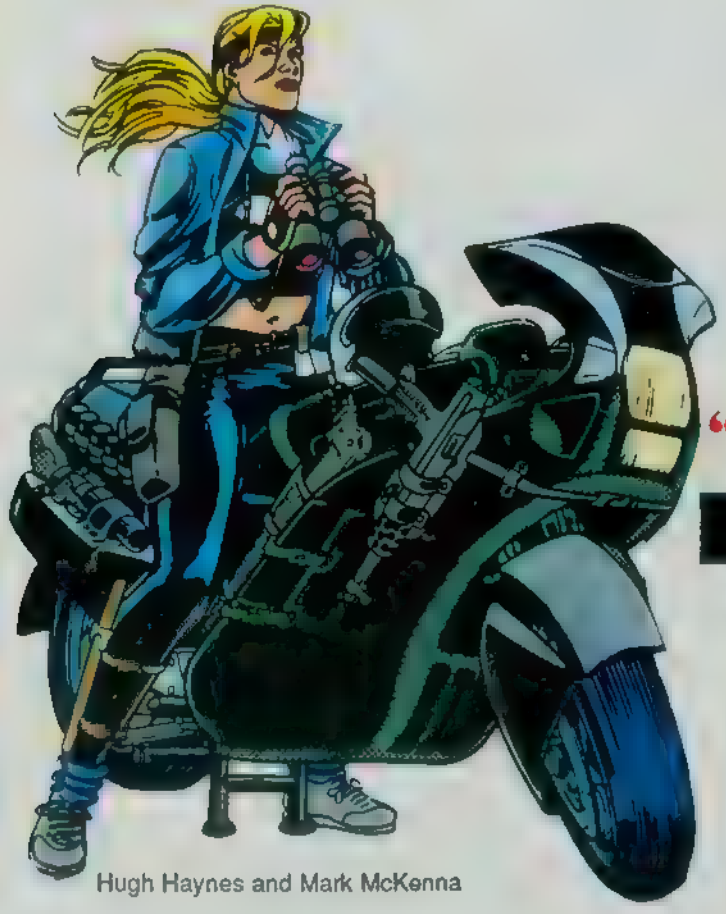
THE MAN – OR WOMAN – WHO

TOP SEVEN REASONS NOT TO BE THE PUNISHER

7. Family life limited to watching bad sitcoms on TV
6. Guys from V.I.G.I.L. won't like you, and they're not very nice
5. The flight to New York won't allow heavy firearms
4. No more free tickets to the policeman's ball
3. Can't wear the costume to the New York Stock Exchange
2. They don't sell black suits with skull appliques at Sears
1. You might get killed

"The Punisher's dead; long live The Punisher." So declared Punisher Editor Don Daley.

Just because Frank Castle appears to die at the beginning of this winter's ten-part "The Punisher: Suicide Run" crossover does not mean that a "Punisher" will not continue to battle New York's underground. On the contrary, Daley said, between November 1992 and March 1993, there will be not one but seven different Punishers on the prowl.



Hugh Haynes and Mark McKenna

The contenders themselves are a motley crew — some willing, some reluctant, some able, at least one completely unable. Four have appeared in Punisher titles before, and the other three will be surfacing for the first time in the pages of one of Marvel's three monthly Punisher titles. Their motivations span the full range, including idealistic hero-worship, mature altruism, narcissistic profiteering, genuine disgust with the ineffectiveness and corruption of the police force, blackmail, and the simple quest for personal glory.

"The Punisher has a very narrow motivation, so the question becomes, 'Why would anyone want to replace The Punisher?'" **PUNISHER** writer Steven Grant posed. "Unless you mimic The Punisher's motivation, which is the case in a couple of situations, there doesn't really seem much point to it. You can't have everyone saying, Well, they killed my wife and kids, too.' The interesting thing about these characters is that they do have different motives."

As for whom, if any, of these will succeed Frank Castle as the next Punisher, Daley added, the answer will not be revealed until the final part of the crossover, shipping March 1994. All that Daley guaranteed is that two of the contenders will end up six feet under in a long black box.

PAYBACK

Real Name: Eddie Dyson
Age: 35
Nationality: U.S.A.
Former Profession: Police officer
Qualifications: Honest ex-cop whom Frank Castle encouraged to expose police force corruption.
Motivation: Guilty police officers killed Payback's wife and kids
First Appearance: **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #49**

"...the question becomes,

When Payback made his debut in **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #49**, he first told Frank Castle he was an "old friend." The man in the white mask sported a black shirt with a red "not" slash across The Punisher's skull trademark.

"None of my friends wear a mask," The Punisher answered, not sure of his opponent's identity.

"That's okay. We're not going to be friends much longer," answered Payback. He proceeded to try to kill Castle — because he blamed The Punisher for the slaughter of his own family.

Frank Castle and ex-cop Eddie Dyson had put aside their differences. Now, ironically, Payback must take up the mantle of his former sworn enemy. But according to **PUNISHER WAR**

WOULD BE PUNISHER PUNISHER

JOURNAL writer Chuck Dixon, Payback remains hesitant about the moral ramifications of his new role. "He's an incredibly tragic character who blames his downfall on The Punisher but [couldn't] bring himself to actually *kill* The Punisher," Dixon said, summing up his character. "He's very much a low-rent vigilante. He wears a brace and doesn't move as fast as most characters. He's on a police disability pension. He drives a 12-year-old car. He's also highly moralistic and questions what he's doing. He was a very, very honest cop."

Thanks to **V.I.G.I.L.**, Payback may not have a choice — that is, if he wants to live.

LYNN MICHAELS

Real Name: Lynn Michaels
Age: Late 20s-early 30s
Nationality: U.S.A. (Madison, WI)
Former Profession: Police Officer
Qualifications: Police Officer
Motivation: Frustrated by a system that let a child killer go free, enlisted Punisher's help and adopted his methods.
First Appearance: PUNISHER WAR ZONE #7

"She was attracted to The Punisher's lifestyle," Dixon said "She saw him as cutting through the paperwork and getting the job done without it."

As for her background, she was raised in the Midwest — what Dixon calls a, "very moral upbringing." He added that, "she becomes a vigilante as a way of making sense of the world Being a cop made sense to her at first, but then she saw criminals go unpunished."

OUTLAW

Real Name: Nigel (surname unknown)
Age: 19
Nationality: British
Former Profession: Motorcycle messenger
Qualifications: Lots of firearms and enthusiasm; owns a motorcycle
Motivation: The Punisher was his #1 hero.
First Appearance: PUNISHER #64 ("Eurohit," Part 1)

When soccer fanatic Nigel learned from the television at his neighborhood pub that The Punisher was dead, he knew he had

'Why would anyone want to replace the Punisher?'"

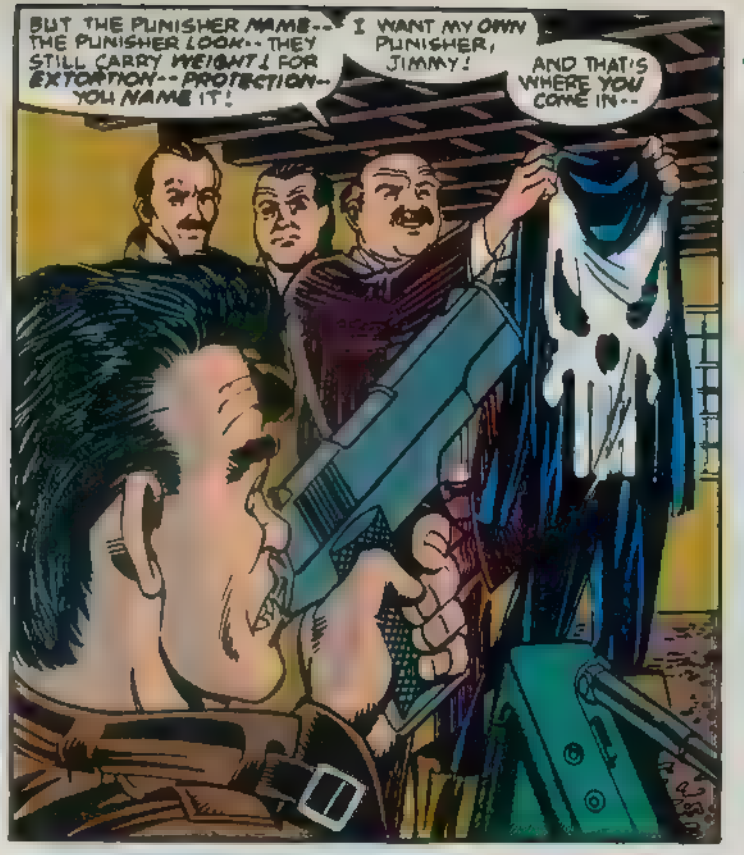
The one woman who dares to don the costume of the Punisher, Lynn Michaels is no dumb blonde, even if she looks rather slinky in her tight-fitting black bodysuit. She originally came to New York at the behest of her older sister, who was a model.

A tough police officer, Michaels met The Punisher while conducting her own private investigation in Central Park, and enlisted his help to take down a serial child killer who had escaped a life sentence thanks to a procedural gaff. Since then, she saved Frank Castle's life in **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #58**, and hints of a possible romantic link have been made. With Castle presumed dead, ditching her badge and taking his place just seems like the logical thing to do.

to get over to New York immediately. The carefree motorcyclist idolized The Punisher and had a chance to team up with him in 1992's "EuroHit" storyline (**PUNISHER #64-#70**). Now Outlaw's determined to find Frank Castle alive or avenge his death.

His only hang-up — just a little matter of a cheerful, sarcastic nature and youthful naivete. He had to be reminded that, if he can't get his motorcycle and guns on the plane, credit cards can buy these things in America. As for his black leather and black T-shirt with the white Punisher skull — no problem.

"I wanted somebody who would be a foil to The Punisher," Daley said. "The Punisher is older, very joyless and grim. Outlaw is young, happy-go-lucky, and foolhardy."


BUT THE PUNISHER NAME-- THE PUNISHER LOOK-- THEY STILL CARRY WEIGHT! FOR EXTORTION-- PROTECTION-- YOU NAME IT!
I WANT MY OWN PUNISHER, JIMMY!
AND THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN--

Hugh Haynes and Frank Percy

THE IDIOT PUNISHER

Real Name: Desmond Kline
Age: 35
Former Profession: Postal Worker
Qualifications: None, except dishonorable discharge, U.S. military.
Motivation: "Somebody ought to do it — why not me?"
First Appearance: PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #62

When a TV news bulletin announces the death of The Punisher, postal worker Desmond Kline decides that not only does New York *need* The Punisher, but that Desmond will replace the big guy himself.

In the beginning, Dixon noted, readers may sympathize and identify with Desmond, comparing him to Michael Douglas's character in *Falling Down*, but it will soon come clear that being The Punisher is not the ideal career choice for a guy who drinks too much beer and is completely out of shape.

What Desmond becomes is closer to the "cum-Arnold Punisher — an armchair gun nut who completely screws up, gets it all backwards," Dixon said. "Basically, Desmond is out there to demonstrate that the Punisher is not a role model. *Don't do this at home*. He just worships The Punisher, and it seems to him an attractive lifestyle to simply go around and kill criminals and then get lauded by the public."

As for Desmond's homemade costume, Dixon described it as "pretty crude."

"My take on it is that not everyone would know what The Punisher's costume looks like," he explained. "Maybe he's seen a blurry picture in the *National Enquirer* or an artist's interpretation on television."

THE YUPPUNISHER

Real Name: Dean Swayvrick
Age: Thirtysomething
Nationality: U.S.A. (Boston)
Former Profession: Entrepreneur/Financial investor
Qualifications: Works out at the gym; can afford high tech flashy costume
Motivation: Money; political power; acquisition and achievement for their own sakes
First Appearance: PUNISHER #86

The Punisher a politician? Dean Swayvrick is, according to Grant, "your basic conservative John Kennedy look-a-like type." He comes from old money, never has worked in his life, but with Frank Castle out of the picture, he sees the perfect career opportunity. All it takes is the right spin control.

"He's got a scheme to rehabilitate the reputation of The Punisher and then become The Punisher himself," Grant said. "He wants to use The Punisher as a rallying point for the disaffected upper middle class and in that way hoist himself into political power."

A "kinder, gentler" Punisher, that is, who doesn't actually kill society's scum but has no qualms about severely injuring them. Grant, however, cautioned that this seemingly more benevolent approach does not equal liberal political correctness, but rather a definite political slant towards presenting The Punisher as the protector of society's more privileged members.

"He basically appeals to all the wrong elements of The Punisher's mystique," Grant continued. "Here's a guy who's going to protect you against those evil minorities and foreigners and junkies who are trying to destroy your society."

Or, as Daley put it, Swayvrick is a "parasite." But then his uncle was Alex Alaric, the villain of the original **PUNISHER** limited series.

THE HIT MAN

Real Name: Jimmy Pierce
Age: 41
Nationality: U.S.A. (Chicago)
Former Profession: Drifter; bar Fighter/bouncer
Qualifications: Former golden Gloves champion, served in Army Special Forces
Motivation: Blackmailed by the Cullin family to hunt down their enemies
First Appearance: PUNISHER #87

The Yuppunisher isn't the only person who sees potential profit in remaking the Punisher in his own image. With Frank Castle dead, Old Man Cullin, patriarch of the notorious mob family, could use his own personal Punisher. Too old to play the dangerous role himself, all he needs is someone in superior physical shape and with crack outlaw instinct. Add that this person be anonymous — a new face to fellow criminals, and nephew Jimmy Pierce seems like the perfect candidate.

"It's a great name; it's a great look; and it's good for intimidation," Grant offered. "Old Man Cullin wants his own Punisher,

to be his enforcer and expand his power in the Underworld." The only problem is that Pierce has always been the "black sheep" of the Cullin family precisely *because* he prefers to operate on his own. He has never acknowledged his relationship to the Cullins, because he hates the thought of being tied down by family obligations.

"He's a drifter who's had a tough life," added Grant. "And he's just not interested in fighting crime or in being a criminal. He sees this as an intrusion."

Unfortunately, Old Man Cullin has some nasty blackmail to dangle over Pierce's head, so his nephew may have no choice. Punisher Pierce will first appear to be operating on his own, and then the Cullins will announce an alliance. As for other Punishers on the loose, Dean Swayvrick will not be pleased with the competition, and Grant promises a "face-to-face violent confrontation."

PHALANX

Real Name: Dick Johnson
Age: Mid-30s
Former Profession: Research Scientist/Engineer
Qualifications: Created armored suit that disperses the impact of any force that strikes it rendering him virtually indestructible. There is only one prototype, and it fits only him.
Motivation: Forced on the run after bringing down the drug cartel that hired him to make the suit; had to desert his wife and son
First Appearance: PUNISHER WAR ZONE ANNUAL #1

"I'm not sure I'd like what you'd do with my creation any more than what those hoods would do," declared Dick Johnson when Frank Castle ordered him to hand over the impregnable body armor nicknamed "Phalanx."

When the scientist learned his potential investors were not members of the national defense industry, but the world's most powerful drug dealers, he pulled a Punisher and opened fire on the crowd of villains. At the conclusion of his debut story, "Bulletproof," he was forced, in order to save his wife and child, to make his wife believe that he had left her for another woman. Now Johnson is back to take revenge

"Basically he's a good man doing the best he can in a bad, bad situation," Daley explained. "As you might expect due to his background as a research scientist, Johnson is extremely pragmatic, very big on logic. He had inevitably come to the conclusion that he was in a position in his life where he was either going to be killed or aid bad people in killing other people, and he found neither prospect attractive. So his reaction was to find a *third* alternative — set out to damage the people who had brought about this situation with these horrible alternatives."

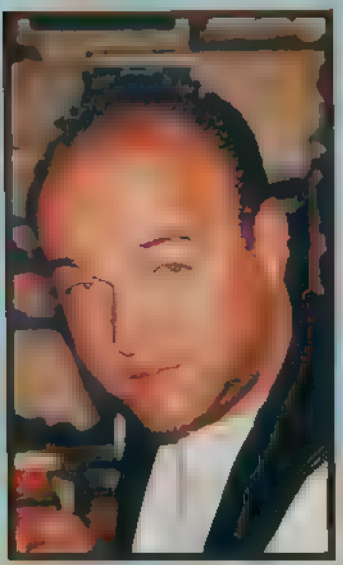
Daley added that at the moment, Johnson is not thinking about adding a skull and darkening his armor. Still, with the protection of his Phalanx suit, fighting for his life in a world without Frank Castle, he may be uniquely poised to become The Punisher's next incarnation whether or not he intends to

From her remote vantage point in the wilds of Georgia, Anya Martin manages to cover a broad variety of topics for ***MARVEL AGE, AVENGERS ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE, GHOST RIDER AND THE MIDNIGHT SONS MAGAZINE,*** *and* ***X-MEN ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE*** *She also finds time to practice as a journalist in a number of esoteric, non-comics fields*

John Buscema

PRO FILES

Karl Bollers



DAN ABNETT

Dan Abnett, who co-writes Punisher specials with Andy Lanning, was born and raised in Rochester, located just south of London, England. A little more than one hundred years earlier, the town produced another writer of note — Charles Dickens.

Dan attended college at Oxford University, where he majored in English and Literature. Upon the completion of his studies, he had a stint as an editorial trainee at Marvel UK for four years before beginning his freelance writing career.

So far, that career has had quite a few highlights. For Dan, one of those highlights was having a hand in the creation of **DEATH'S HEAD II**, perhaps Marvel UK's most famous and popular character - the adventures of this heavy-hitting cyborg have made him the British equivalent of Wolverine. Also, Dan and his aforementioned cohort Andy Lanning have recently completed a revamp of the Avengers West Coast, to be called **FORCE WORKS**. It was a thrill for Dan to help chart the adventures of one of Marvel's premiere super hero teams, he noted.

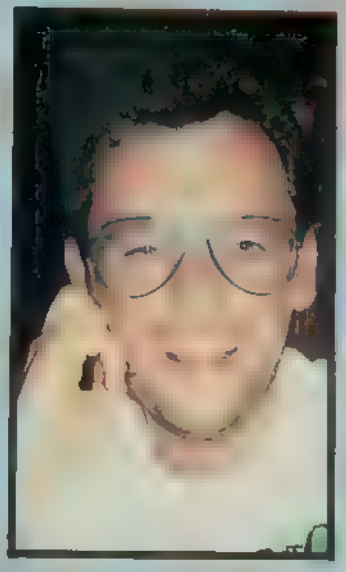
However, Dan showed unbridled excitement when asked about Frank Castle. His philosophy towards the character is one that exhibits a lot of grey areas, paralleling The Punisher's approach to his war on crime. Dan notes that the character is very difficult to write, this stemming from the fact that The Punisher uses "eye for an eye" tactics which make him no better than the types of villains he comes up against. So Dan is faced with the challenge of, in fiction, making appealing a character who is abhorrent in realistic terms.

Yet, Dan couldn't help but admit that the character is so driven, so off the beaten path, that he is a great catalyst for adventure. Dan feels that Frank Castle has his precursor in morality plays, and in fact is a latter-day urban extension of these performances which were used to teach harsh lessons. Dan makes even deeper comparisons to William Shakespeare's characters Hamlet and Macbeth, both of whom were good men trying to do what they felt was the right thing. These decisions led to their downfall, ultimately resulting in tragedy. Only time will tell the ultimate fate of Marvel's favorite hard-boiled vigilante.

Dan, who currently resides in Derbyshire, finds that his writing strength lies in dialogue, so usually his working relationship with Andy consists of strengthening the plot and structure through the voices of the characters. As co-writers, both have the luxury of playing devil's advocate to each other's material, something a lone scribe doesn't. Thus they prove the old adage that two heads are better than one!

PRO FILES

Karl Bollers



ANDY LANNING

Born in Ramsgate, off the coast of Kent in England, Andy Lanning (writing partner to Dan Abnett on **FORCE WORKS** and a number of Punisher projects) always knew he wanted to be a penciler and his passion was so great that, while he was attending the Midway College of Design, he often drew his own comics during what little spare time is afforded a young graphic design student.

Of his college major, Andy said, "We didn't have a Kubert School — the closest thing, as far as training to be a comic artist, was in graphic design." While at Midway he hooked up with the Society of Strip Illustrators (S.S.I.) and at their monthly meetings he met many British writers and artists whose work he admired, including Dave Gibbons and David Lloyd

While still in college, Andy did his very first *published* strip for *Looking*, the British equivalent of *T.V. Guide*, where he illustrated the life story of pop-musician Boy George, former front-man for Culture Club. Through his S.S.I. contacts, he got an ongoing freelance assignment at Marvel U K., which at that time focused on licensed titles geared towards a younger target audience. Thus, **GHOSTBUSTERS** featured Andy's penciling debut, and it was on this project that he met Dan Abnett, the **GHOSTBUSTERS** writer. Andy also shared a studio with Liam Sharpe — currently one of the hottest artists in Great Britain and the penciler of **DEATH'S HEAD II**

Andy teamed with co-creator John Carnell on the Abnett-edited **SLEEZE BROTHERS**, one of Marvel U.K.'s first attempts to do comics in the "American style" (smaller format, full-color). Then, in a testament to his creative versatility, he was asked to ink the **KNIGHTS OF PENDRAGON** series written by Abnett and penciled by Gary Erskine.

The success of Punisher material reprinted in a weekly format for British newsstand audiences spurred Marvel U.K. to commission all-new Punisher stories. Dan and Andy took a shot at chronicling the forays of Frank Castle, and their first co-writing effort eventually became "Eurohit," an eight-issue story arc (illustrated by UK artist Doug Braithwaite) in the United States **PUNISHER #64-70**. "Eurohit" was a hit in the States, making Dan and Andy successes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Of his self-proclaimed "cartoonish" penciling style, Andy commented, "While my work was effective for **GHOSTBUSTERS** and the **SLEEZE BROTHERS**, I would have had to re-teach myself how to draw in the style of super hero comics." So he came to realize that his strength, for the moment, lay in writing, though his former days as a penciler tend to influence his writing, to which he takes a visual approach. "I'm more of an 'ideas' man than a scripter — that's why Dan and myself compliment each other perfectly. His strong point is dialogue," Andy explained.

Asked what he feels makes The Punisher character tick, Andy noted, "Frank always gets the job done; it's because he's bought a round-trip ticket on the runaway train that has become his life. He really can't justify what he does as right or wrong, [he's] simply acting because of prior events in his life." He went on to observe that Frank Castle's tunnel-vision obsession doesn't extend to endangering the lives of innocents. His wife and children were innocents who ended up casualties in a tragic mob-war, and Frank himself represents lost innocence because, after having lived through such a trauma, he can only exist now as. . .The Punisher!

WHERE ARE THEY

BUR

Charlie Bash — This narcotics officer continues to work the streets of Baltimore with his ever-present partner Sam the Clam.

Batroc — The French assassin and master of the Savate style of kick-fighting remains at large.

Blackheart — The frustrated son of Mephisto, this demon attempted to overthrow his father by manipulating Ghost Rider, Wolverine, and The Punisher. Recently, he used Simon Williams, the adventurer known as Wonder Man, to attack Mephisto.

Belasco — Ageless demonic sorcerer, deposed from his mystic realm Limbo several years ago. He occasionally masquerades as the Devil, as he did in manipulating the Reverend.

Board — Deceased. On payroll of the Kingpin, this adolescent hacker went keyboard to keyboard with Micro Chip. He was killed while trying to betray the Kingpin.

Melinda Brewer — This surgeon temporarily altered The Punisher's skin color so Castle would appear black, and has since gone into hiding, still fighting her drug addiction

Bushwacker — With the power to transform his arm into a deadly weapon, this mercenary still stalks mutants.

Cage — The former "hero-for-hire," Luke Cage is presumed dead and acting undercover, location unknown.

Cane — Deceased One of the seven deadly assassins hired by Rosalie Carbone, the English mercenary died in his attempt to gain the bounty on Frank Castle's head.

Captain America — One of the few super heroes who actually commands The Punisher's respect, super soldier Steve Rogers is finding his ethics clashing with those of his teammates in The Avengers.

Christie Castle — Deceased. Frank and Maria Castle's daughter, killed as an innocent bystander when witnessing a mob rubout. The death of his family led Castle to adopt the role of The Punisher.

Frank Castle, Jr. — Deceased. Frank and Maria Castle's son, killed as an innocent bystander when witnessing a mob rubout.

Maria Castle — Deceased. Frank Castle's wife, killed as an innocent bystander when witnessing a mob rubout

Rosalie Carbone — Daughter of a deceased crime boss, Rosalie was manipulated by The Punisher and so wields her Mafia influence to avenge her father's death at Castle's hands. She has placed a five million dollar bounty on The Punisher's head

Adam Casim — Deceased. Empowered with supernatural flame, Casim declared war upon any person connected with the occult, real or fraud, until his misguided crusade was ended by The Punisher.

Combat — Deceased. This longhorn killer sought the Carbone bounty on The Punisher. One of the seven assassins specifically selected by Rosalie herself to kill Frank Castle, he died in a pitched battle between The Punisher and several of the mercenaries.

Dr. Cord — Creator of the Phalanx armor, this scientist is on the run to protect his technology from powerful criminal elements, having left behind his most prized possession: his family

Daredevil — Now clad in a new, armored costume, this crimefighter hunts Elektra, his former lover and current enemy.

Darkhold Redeemers — Louise Hastings, a professor of the occult, died during her time with this group of adventurers who seek pages of the ancient occult tome *The Darkhold*. Her partners, Vicki Montesi and Frank Buchanan, have taken up residency with the mysterious Dr. Strange.

I E D

The Family — Ma, Pa, Mitch, Gig, and Bosephus left the South to take over the East Coast drug market. In a three-way battle involving The Punisher, Killer-B, and The Family, Ma was the only person, besides The Punisher, to survive.

Wilson Fisk — The "humble dealer of Spices," Wilson Fisk was the Kingpin of Crime in New York until various forces, including Daredevil and Hydra, brought about the destruction of his criminal empire. Presently he is in hiding, attempting to rebuild his network of crime.

Garotte — Deceased. One of the seven assassins attracted by Rosalie Carbone's bounty on The Punisher, this quiet French killer almost succeeded in collecting, working in tandem with Tequila.

Ghost Rider — During the Siege of Darkness, Ghost Rider fell at the hands of his enemies, and has been replaced by the supernatural vigilante Vengeance.

The Hulk — With Bruce Banner now in full control of his alter-ego, the intelligent Hulk is an occasional ally of The Punisher, and last teamed up with him in Las Vegas.

Forest Hunt — Deceased The actual target of the mob shooting that killed The Punisher's family, Hunt died along with Maria, Christie, and Frank Castle, Jr.

HYDRA — A global terrorist organization, currently very active and led by Baron Von Strucker. It played a pivotal role in the downfall of Wilson Fisk's criminal empire.

Jigsaw — The disfigured former mobster remains at large and is obsessed with revenging himself upon The Punisher

Hiram Jones — Deceased. This weapon designer created the killer robots. After he sent his robots to kill his rivals, he and his creations were stopped by The Punisher.

Junior — Deceased. After years of separation from his father, Louis Frohike joined his father, known as "Micro," in working for The Punisher. His hacking skills were a great asset, but his desire to aid The Punisher in action proved to be his downfall.

Killer B — Deceased. A PCP variant temporarily transformed this simple drug dealer into a super-strong maniac. Although strong enough to demolish The Punisher's specially designed suit of armor, Killer B still died by The Punisher's hand.

The Kingpin of Crime — See "Wilson Fisk."

Max — One of The Punisher's lines of defense, this powerful Rottweiler attack-trained dog usually guards Castle's more frequently-used safehouse.

Linus Lieberman — See "Micro," "Junior."

Lynn Michaels — Upon learning of The Punisher's apparent death, this former police detective has given up her badge to fight crime — Punisher style

Micro — Linus Lieberman is The Punisher's chief weapon designer, engineer, computer wizard, confidant, and friend. Ironically enough, Micro also designs toys for children.

Midnight — Former partner of Moon Knight, Midnight betrayed his former friend and became a cyborg in the service of the Secret Empire. Last seen trapped under a collapsing building, Midnight is presumed dead.

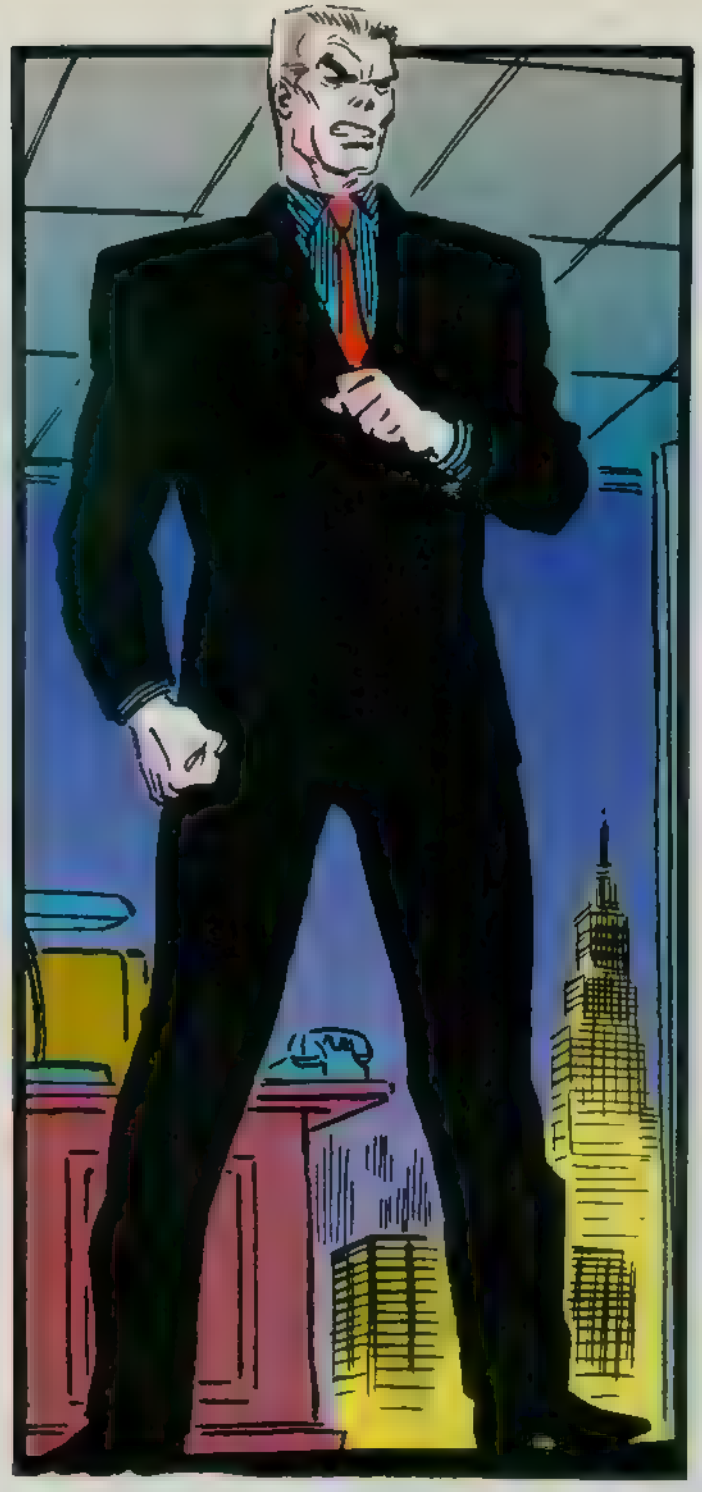
Hector Montoya — Deceased. This criminal was responsible for the crossfire killing Maria, Christie, and Frank Castle, Jr. Years later, Frank Castle got his revenge.

Moon Knight — The Fist of Konshu, this wealthy crimefighter is really Marc Spector.

New Warriors — Teenage super hero team consisting of Night Thrasher, Firestar, Speedball, Nova, Namorita, Rage, Justice, and Silhouette, is currently active.

The Nightstalkers — Blade, Hannibal King, Frank Drake. Now defunct, Blade's partners are presumed dead.

A PUNISHER'S WHO WAS (AND IS) WHO



Blade has vowed to continue his mission against all arcane forces.

Night Thrasher — The armored leader of the New Warriors (see listing).

Nomad — Formerly "Bucky" to the Captain America of the 1950's, Jack Monroe adopted the identity of Nomad and, true to his name, wanders from locale to locale to fight crime.

Outlaw — This young English motorcycle messenger came to the United States to battle crime in light of The Punisher's apparent death. Presently, he is working with ex-detective Lynn Michaels (see listing)

The Pantheon — This mysterious strike force, now led by the Hulk, fights political injustice around the globe.

Payback — A former police officer, this vigilante blames The Punisher for the death of his family, but stepped in to fill Frank Castle's role after The Punisher's apparent death.

The Punisher — Frank Castle, presumed dead after succeeding in his "Suicide Run."

Pyre — An insane youth wielding microwave energies, Hector Grey successfully fought off both Venom and The Punisher, before disappearing in a collapsing building. He is now presumed dead

The Reavers — With the exception of Lady Deathstrike and Cylla, these mutant-hating cyborgs all perished at the hands of the Upstart named Fitzroy and his futuristic robotic Sentinels.

The Reverend — Left to die in the jungle by The Punisher, Reverend Sammy Smith embraced Satanism and gained incredible healing powers when the sorcerer Belasco used him to further his own agenda. The Reverend was last seen trapped in a flaming helicopter, abandoned by Belasco, and is presumed dead

Roc — Deceased. This seemingly invulnerable killer, possessor of a remarkably high pain threshold, was one of the seven assassins Rosalie Carbone contracted to kill The Punisher.

Sabretooth — This ferocious mutant, once the sworn enemy of the X-Men, is now a provisional member of that mutant group.

Sam the Clam — Partnered with fellow officer Charlie Bash, Sam speaks in monosyllabic grunts.

Secret Empire — A criminal terrorist organization formerly based in New York, it is now in disarray since many of the members of its administrative circle were killed in the course of combat with The Punisher, Moon Knight, and Spider-Man.

Erwin Shane — Director of a mass hypnosis project, Shane captured hundreds of murderers, transforming them into "sleeper" assassin agents. Castle became one of the subjects but, with the help of Micro, fought off the conditioning and destroyed both the project and Shane.

Shiv — This mystical cult leader slashed his way across Boston, accidentally infusing Adam Casim with mystical fire. He continued his rampage, armed with blades magically fused into his skin, but was killed by Casim and The Punisher.

Shotgun — A lethal government assassin and one of the few men The Punisher calls a friend, Shotgun is still operating in the name of his country

Silence — Deceased. Rosalie Carbone enticed this Madripoor ninja with the bounty on Frank Castle. While staking out one of The Punisher's safehouses, he was killed by Micro.

The Slug — This obese crimelord continues to grow in both power and girth. Most recently, Captain America saved him from being killed by a mesmerized Nomad.

Snakebite — Deceased. One of the Kingpin's "special" agents, Snakebite was unable to keep The Punisher from Fisk's bid to control the European criminal community.

Mary-Louise Snoffer — Deceased. Part of Dr. Shane's "sleeper" program, she was led to believe she was Frank Castle's wife. Snoffer was in reality a cold-hearted butcher. Shane's men killed her and the rest of Castle's "family" when the program went awry.

Spider-Man — This wall-crawling super hero still finds himself at odds with The Punisher's lethal methods.

Stiletto — Deceased. Another mercenary after the Carbone contract on The Punisher, Stiletto's blades proved no match against Frank Castle

Reverend Styge — Empowered by a *Darkhold* page, this servant of Centurious gained the power to bring the dead back to life. Offering him the return of his family, Styge attempted to entice the Punisher into working for him. Disbelieving his offer, Castle killed him.

Tarantula II — The high-kicking soldier of fortune is currently active in Europe.

Tequila — An exotic mistress of poisons, Tequila tried to collect the Carbone bounty, but was killed by another assassin after the money.

Tombstone — This pale mob leader can barely speak above a whisper, but his super strength and invulnerability have sorely tested both The Punisher and Spider-Man. Presently, Lonnie Thomas Lincoln is in jail

Venom — Eddie Brock, possessor of the alien symbiote that gives him super abilities similar to those of Spider-Man, bases himself on the West Coast and has appointed himself protector of an underground group of the homeless.

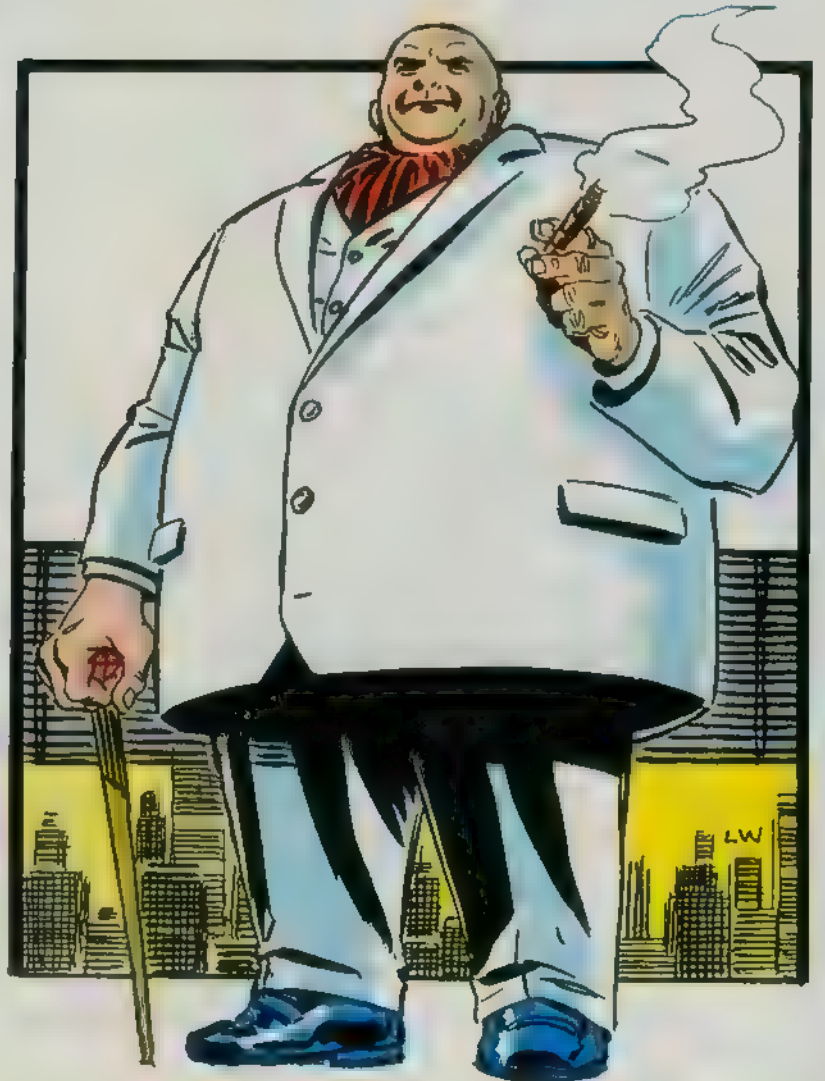
Von Burian — First name unknown. A former military comrade of Frank Castle, Von Burian worked in various illegal cover-ups for the government, one of which included targeting many of Castle's army-day friends. Also known as Sniper, Von Burian was last seen trapped in a crashing jet, and is presumed dead.

Wolverine — Also known as Logan or "Patch," this fierce mutant has left the X-Men and gone to Canada, attempting to recover from crippling injuries dealt to him by the mutant Magneto.

George Wong — Deceased. Adviser, bodyguard, and accountant for Wilson Fisk, George fell during a rival gang's raid upon The Punisher.

The Yuppunisher — Little is known about this mysterious young urban professional who intends to take up the fight against crime after the apparent death of The Punisher.

Chuck Kim, whose expertise concerning Marvel Comics has led the experts to consult him on a variety of occasions and subjects, has worked in a variety of capacities ranging from editorial to licensing, and more recently as a ***MARVEL AGE*** *writer.*



On those who dwell in

Imagine a world without depth or definition — the line of a smiling baby's cheek indistinguishable from that of a bodybuilder's biceps or the fins of a Fairlane convertible.

Now imagine a world devoid of color; gone the brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows of the setting sun or the ominous grays and purples of an advancing storm. Finally, imagine a world without singing birds, sirens, whispers in the dark, music — all gone. These things we take for granted provide the emotion, excitement, and drama that make life interesting.

Inkers, colorists, and letterers play the same role in a comic book — heightening the emotional intensity of each panel whether the scene be one of high action or quiet suspense. No comic more exemplifies the importance of these qualities than **THE PUNISHER.**

A BLACK AND WHITE WORLD

Don Daley, editor on the Punisher family, believes that the inking on The Punisher may be more important than any other aspect because "black" is so important to the character.

When The Punisher was first conceived by Gerry Conway and John Romita, Sr., back in 1974, the design element of the costume was meant as a comment on the ideals of the character. "The Punisher's world is black and white," Don explained. "People either deserve to be killed or they deserve to be protected. There is no gray in The Punisher's world." Don went so far as to say that the best Punisher stories should be able to print in black and white, and related a recent incident to support his claim. When John Romita, Jr., was drawing **PUNISHER WAR ZONE,** a preview was sent to Marvel fan club members before the first issue hit the stands. All the mail that Don received on the black and white ashcan expressed an overwhelming desire that the book be printed in black and white.

Often, Don likes pencilers who ink themselves, "basically because they are happier," Don explained. "The artist. . .tends to do a better job because all the work is his, especially if the artist did completed pencils. Then, they give the time, attention, and effort that good inks require."

Otherwise, Don likes an inker who can help give the pencils a particular flavor. He does not want a line tracer. "I like a heavy inking technique with a lot of black and weight in it which creates a mood." Don has worked with some of the greatest inkers in the business, artists who he believes he could send any pencils. He cited Al Williamson and Klaus Janson, but for diametrically different reasons.

"Al can handle just about anyone, whether I give him an eighteen-year-old kid or a forty-year pro," Don explained. "He is chameleon-like in his sensitivity to whatever style he is working on. Klaus, on the other hand, steamrollers whoever's underneath. Some pencilers tell a story *so* dramatically that their actual penciling isn't that great," he clarified. "The layouts are nice but the particular penciler doesn't know how to place blacks or can't do real anatomy or doesn't know his way around a background. When I give the pencils to Klaus, all that he leaves is the storytelling.

"Klaus's inking is so incredibly powerful," he continued, "that unless you line him up with a Johnny Romita, Jr., or someone equally as powerful, the end product is going to look very Klaus-like. That is not a bad thing. That is a very good thing. I like confidence in an inker."

Another reason Don enjoys using a Gary Kwapisz or John Buscema is that their stuff is unlike anyone else's. "Everyone

MARK McKENNA — inker, **THE PUNISHER:** A graduate of the School of Visual Arts in New York and of Marvel's "Romita's Raiders" internship program, Mark's first work was inking the cover of an early issue of **THE MICRONAUTS.** His first full inking assignment appeared in Now Comics' *Dai Kamikaze* in 1987. After inking several different DC titles, Mark had been working at Marvel for five years when the **PUNISHER** team tagged him for work on their titles. He is most proud of his work on the "Psychoville" storyline in **PUNISHER WAR ZONE.**

GLYNIS OLIVER — colorist, **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL:** After receiving her degree in commercial art from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Farmingdale, Glynis served a stint in the DC Comics production department, then began coloring for Marvel in the early '70s, doing covers, then back-up stories. She received a regular assignment on **THE AVENGERS,** and her work began to attract a great deal of critical praise when she took on the coloring for **THE UNCANNY X-MEN,** an assignment she continued for many years. Her more recent assignments include **NAMOR, EXCALIBUR,** and **X-FACTOR.**

else is trying to look like them. I want that personal vision. If I've got a guy who is inking himself, he tends to follow through, particularly if he is also coloring himself. Michael Golden, coloring his own inks over someone else's pencils, is really a special flavor."

THE ROCKETS' RED GLARE

As for coloring the Punisher titles, Don admits to using a wide variety of colorists, depending on the artwork, although he tends to like those whose work is somewhat realistic and moody. With a Simon Bisley or Hoang Nguyen, for example, Don would utilize a colorist with a style reminiscent of MTV — a more extreme, wilder, and louder approach that, as he puts it, "you can hear a block away."

Experience and familiarity with the art form seem to be most important. "I want a guy who knows the color coding system really well," Don explained, "someone who can do press specific work, K-tones, offsets, ten percents, seventy percents — the full capabilities at the separators and printers." One such colorist is Greg Wright who, although relatively new in the industry, has the skills of a colorist of many more years experience. "I use Greg to color over Johnny Romita, Jr., or Jim Lee. His palette is new and fresh, but he knows the traditional ways we think of color for clarity, depth, and drama, *and* still make it attractive. Greg can handle *any* format because of his great skill with subtleties of coloring and finesse with incremental gradations."

Don referred to an early Jim Lee **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL** story to illustrate his point. The Punisher was having a Vietnam flashback in one scene, which Greg colored in nothing but shades of blue and gray. "He used like fifty different shades of blue and gray," Don explained. "A lot of colorists couldn't do that because they do not have control of the palette enough and they cannot project what the finished work will look like."

"I want those kinds of people who can fine tune stuff. Michael Golden is a genius with color. He can take a piece that stinks and make it look pretty good, or take a *great* piece and follow through. There's an old editorial joke: 'We'll save it in the color.' If the story or art is bad, 'We'll save it in the color.' A Greg Wright or Michael Golden can do that."

WHAT'D HE SAY?

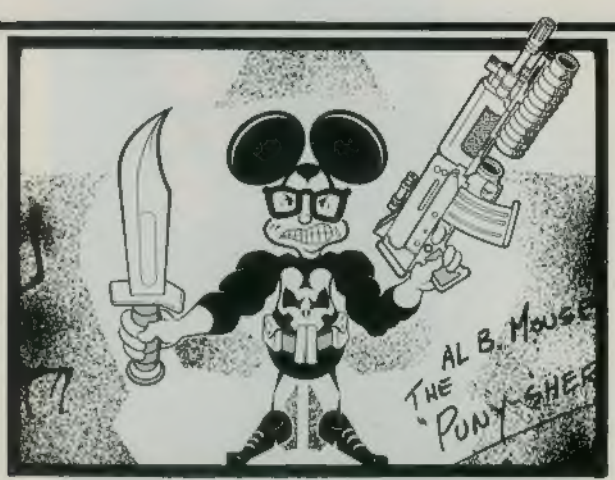
If Don's taste in inking and coloring qualities tends toward the moody and stylish, then his taste in lettering falls on the opposite side of the road. "I want a traditionally masculine, very Spartan look — not quite anonymous, but big, bold, simple, and surgically clean.

"I have all my letterers set their Ames Guide at three and a quarter which is a little big," he revealed. This larger, clearer font helps prevent a familiar problem in lettering, the closing up of letters. When letters close up, they may resemble other letters. "P's" may begin to resemble "D's," and "S's" may start looking like "B's." The most infamous example occurs when the letters "LI" close up and resemble the letter "U."

Balloon placement is also important. "We want to tell a story, so if a letterer kills the visual storytelling by placing word balloons over integral pieces of artwork, we kill the letterer," Don said with a laugh.

"The secret to this whole editing thing is to have really good people — the best people you can find — and try to make sure that they have whatever they need to do the job. . .Get them the best paper, nibs, paints, brushes, and pens, give them enough time to do their best work and get them pumped up, then just stand back."

— Stephen Vrattos



VAL MAYERIK — inker, **PUNISHER WAR ZONE:** Val was an art school dropout making $50 a week teaching karate before he showed his portfolio to Dan Adkins. He has worked for several Warren Magazines, *Heavy Metal*, and painted the short-lived **VOID INDIGO.** He has never been on a regular series except for Marvel's **MAN-THING** and **FRANKENSTEIN** in the early seventies.

MICK GRAY — background inker, **THE PUNISHER:** Although also assisting Randy Emberlin on **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** and Ian Akin on **DARKHAWK** and **MAD DOG,** Mick found his work on Chuck Austin's adult titles for Slave Labor most frustrating. "I never got to ink the beautiful naked bodies Chuck was drawing, just the beds and furniture that they were reclined upon!"

GARY KWAPISZ — inker, **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL:** Gary worked on Marvel's humor magazine, **CRAZY,** shortly before it was canceled. Editor Larry Hama took over the editorial duties for **THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN** and Gary followed, doing penciling and inking on the book for eight years. Gary has also worked on **MOON KNIGHT** and DC's *Hawkworld*.

MIKE HIGGINS — letterer, **THE PUNISHER, PUNISHER WAR ZONE:** Hanging out with George Perez back in 1977 helped Mike get his first lettering job on the first story Jo Duffy ever wrote — in a **HULK TREASURY EDITION.** Since then, this former bullpenner and editorial staffer has lettered everything from **AKIRA** to **G.I. JOE VS. THE TRANSFORMERS.**

JIM NOVAK — letterer, **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL:** Before submitting samples to John Verpoorten at the age of 18, Jim worked in a sign shop in the Chicago suburbs. His first job at Marvel, lettering a short Doug Moench/Michael Kaluta story, appeared in one of Marvel's 1970s black and white horror magazines. He joined the Bullpen as staff letterer in about 1975 and worked his way up to the position of production manager (overseeing the Bullpen, separations, and engraving) before going back to lettering in the late 1980s. His lettering has appeared in **ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, THE AVENGERS,** and, more recently, **HAWKEYE,** and **SCARLET WITCH.** He has designed the logos for **DAREDEVIL, PUNISHER WAR ZONE, WEB OF SPIDER-MAN,** and **X-FACTOR.**

KEVIN TINSLEY — colorist, **PUNISHER WAR ZONE:** Kevin is a graduate of the Joe Kubert School and is now a full-time Marvel Bullpenner, as well as a freelance colorist. He is most proud of his coloring on the "Psychoville" storyline in **PUNISHER WAR ZONE.**

JOHN KALISZ — colorist, **THE PUNISHER:** While one of Romita's Raiders, John was asked if he could color three **CONAN** pages during lunch. The rest was history, as John has gone on to become a full-time free-lance colorist and has worked on **SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE, SECRET DEFENDERS, NIGHTSTALKERS,** and the **BLAZE** limited series.

JANICE CHIANG — letterer, **PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL:** Janice has been a professional letterer with Marvel for 13 years and has lettered every major Marvel title except **THE UNCANNY X-MEN.** She is currently working on nine monthly titles as well as numerous fill-in issues of various others. She is most proud of creating the word balloons for Ghost Rider and being the first woman to break into the CBG lettering poll.

For continuing updates on the fate of The Punisher, follow the monthly

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